



CITY OF NORMAN, OK STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 03/26/2024

REQUESTER: Katherine Coffin

PRESENTER: David Riesland, Transportation Engineer

ITEM TITLE: CONSIDERATION OF ADOPTION, REJECTION, AMENDMENT, AND/OR POSTPONEMENT OF RESOLUTION R-2324-129: A RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORMAN, OKLAHOMA, PROGRAMMING IIJA ACT SET ASIDE OF STBG FUNDING FOR TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A MULTIMODAL PATH ALONG THE NORTH SIDE OF STATE HIGHWAY 9 BETWEEN 72ND AND 84TH AVENUES SE.

BACKGROUND:

The Federal Transit Administration's Transportation Alternative (TA) program has historically provided funding for projects and programs defined as transportation alternatives that advance non-motorized transportation opportunities, including on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, infrastructure projects for improving non-driver access to public transportation and enhanced mobility, community improvement activities, historic transportation preservation, environmental mitigation and vegetation management activities; recreational trail programs; safe routes to school projects; and projects for planning, designing, or constructing boulevards and other roadways largely in the right-of-way of former Interstate System routes or other divided highways. TA continues to build upon the legacy of the Transportation Enhancements (TE) and Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) programs by providing funding opportunities for local projects that support additional transportation options, strengthen local economies, improve quality of life, protect the natural environment, and enhance transportation infrastructure.

The Federal Infrastructure Improvement and Jobs Act (IIJA) replaced TA with a set-aside of Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Program funding. These set-aside funds include all projects and activities that were previously eligible under TA, encompassing a variety of transportation projects that prioritize safety, comfort, and connectivity to destinations for all people who use the street network such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities, recreational trails, safe routes to school projects, community improvements such as historic preservation and vegetation management, and environmental mitigation related to Stormwater and habitat connectivity. The call for projects, through the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT), is now open and will remain open through May 31, 2024.

DISCUSSION:

The proposed project will be the fifth 1-mile segment of 10-foot wide concrete multi-modal path that will ultimately connect the existing network of sidewalks/paths in the City of Norman to the roads and trails at Lake Thunderbird State Park. Additionally, this path, when completed, will provide an excellent facility for citizens to walk, jog, or bike between south central Norman and Lake Thunderbird. These activities have consistently been among the highest recreational priorities in our community. When the entire path is completed, promotional guides, brochures, and maps showing and promoting this path will be distributed by various entities including the Oklahoma Department of Tourism, various chambers of commerce, and visitor bureaus. The need for the multi-modal path along the State Highway 9 corridor was first identified during the public hearings that ODOT conducted in 2010 as part of the design and environmental clearance process associated with road improvements and was phased over a number of years. The initial citizen and City Council request was for the multi-modal path to be included in the various State Highway 9 improvement projects. State officials opted not to do so; rather to support the City of Norman with the implementation of separate multi-modal path projects under the TE program. The first two phases, between 24th Avenue SE and 48th Avenue SE, were implemented using this approach. The next two miles of path between 48th and 72nd Avenues SE are currently under design.

A call for projects for the next ODOT TA set-aside program is currently open and will close on May 31, 2024. For this call, staff will be submitting a project for one of the next two miles of multi-modal path along State Highway 9. The application associated with this Resolution will be for the mile between 72nd and 84th Avenues SE.

The call for projects documentation indicates that grants will be awarded in Fall 2024. If the City is successful in receiving a grant, City Council must consider acceptance of the grant and entering into an agreement with ODOT. In that case, construction of the path might take place in early 2026.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of Resolution R-2324-129 (State Highway 9 multi-modal path between 72nd Avenue SE and 84th Avenue SE) requesting ODOT TA funding to provide 80% of the anticipated \$1,174,722.45 construction cost.