



**Eastern Sierra Council of Governments (ESCOG)
Joint Powers Authority Agenda**

Wednesday, October 23, 2024, 8:30 a.m.

437 Old Mammoth Road, Suite Z, Mammoth Lakes

Members of the Board

Mono County Supervisor Bob Gardner - Chair, City of Bishop Councilmember Stephen Muchovej - Vice Chair, Inyo County Supervisor Jeff Griffiths, Inyo County Supervisor Trina Orrill, Mono County Supervisor Lynda Salcido, Town of Mammoth Lakes Mayor John Wentworth, Town of Mammoth Lakes Councilmember Chris Bubser, City of Bishop Councilmember Karen Schwartz

NOTE: In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the Assistant Clerk at (760) 965-3615. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the Town to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting. (28 CFR 13.102-35.104 ADA Title II)

NOTE: Materials related to an item on this agenda submitted after distribution of the agenda packet are available for public inspection in the Town Offices located at 437 Old Mammoth Road, Suite 230 during normal business hours. Such documents are also available on the ESCOG website at www.escog.ca.gov subject to staff's ability to post the documents before the meeting.

NOTE: You may watch this meeting on the Town of Mammoth Lakes' (TOML) website at <https://pub-townofmammothlakes.escribemeetings.com/?Year=2024>, via Zoom or on TOML's local government cable channel 18. Public comments may be submitted to the ESCOG Clerk at clerk@townofmammothlakes.ca.gov before and during the meeting or may be made via Zoom or in person.

ZOOM INFORMATION

Join from a PC, Mac, iPad, iPhone or Android device:

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Or join by phone:

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***To raise your hand press *9, To Unmute/Mute press *6 Webinar ID: 924 2142 7651**

International numbers available: <https://monocounty.zoom.us/j/92421427651>

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Notice to the Public: This time is set aside to receive public comment on matters not calendared on the agenda. When recognized by the Chair, please state your name and address for the record and please limit your comments to three minutes. Under California law the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments Board is prohibited from generally discussing or taking action on items not included in the agenda; however, the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments Board may briefly respond to comments or questions from members of the public. Therefore, the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments Board will listen to all public comment but will not generally discuss the matter or take action on it.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

4.1 Approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of August 28, 2024

4.2 Approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of September 25, 2024

4.3 Receive Inyo Mono Broadband Consortium Activities Report

4.4 Receive Findings and Recommendations from Caltrans Audit

4.5 Approve Letter to the 18th District Agriculture Association, California Department of Food and Agriculture and Division of Fairs & Expositions

5. POLICY MATTERS

5.1 Approve Amendment No. 1 to Proposition 1 Watershed Restoration Grant Program Eastern Sierra Pace & Scale Accelerator

5.2 Adopt 2024 ESCOG Board Calendar and Approve Moving December ESCOG Meeting Date to December 4, 2024

5.3 Receive Update on California Jobs First Catalyst Concepts

5.4 Executive Director Update Report

6. BOARD MEMBER/AGENCY REPORTS

Informational reports from Member Agency representatives on committees, commissions, and organizations; general reports on Board Member activities

7. REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

8. ADJOURNMENT

The ESCOG will adjourn to the next regular meeting scheduled to be held on December 18, 2024.



Eastern Sierra Council of Governments (ESCOG) - Joint Powers Authority (JPA)

Minutes of Regular Meeting

August 28, 2024, 8:30 a.m.

Dual Locations: Bishop Council Chambers and Mammoth Lakes Council Chambers

Bishop Council Chambers 377 West Line Street, Bishop, CA 93514

Mammoth Lakes Council Chambers 437 Old Mammoth Rd., Ste Z Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Members Present: Chair Bob Gardner, Vice Chair Stephen Muchovej, Board Member Trina Orrill, Board Member Lynda Salcido, Board Member John Wentworth, Board Member Chris Bubser, Board Member Karen Schwartz

Members Absent: Board Member Jeff Griffiths

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Bob Gardner called the meeting to order at 8:36 a.m. in the Bishop Council Chambers, 377 West Line Street, Bishop California. Board Members Lynda Salcido and Chris Bubser attended the meeting in the Mammoth Lakes Council Chambers, 437 Old Mammoth Road, Mammoth Lakes, California.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Board Member John Wentworth led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development Community Programs Specialist Tonja Galentine introduced herself, spoke about the counties she worked with, and provided information about the programs her department offered.

There was discussion between Ms. Galentine and members of the Board.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

Moved by Vice Chair Stephen Muchovej
Seconded by Board Member Karen Schwartz

Approve the Consent Agenda.

For (7): Chair Bob Gardner, Vice Chair Stephen Muchovej, Board Member Trina Orrill, Board Member Lynda Salcido, Board Member John Wentworth, Board Member Chris Bubser, and Board Member Karen Schwartz

Absent (1): Board Member Jeff Griffiths

Carried (7 to 0)

- 4.1 **Approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of June 26, 2024**
- 4.2 **Inyo Mono Broadband Consortium Activities Report**
- 4.3 **Ratification of Inyo Mono Broadband Consortium Year 1 Audit**
- 4.4 **Approve Buttermilks Climbing Area Vault Toilet Building Donation**
- 4.5 **Approve the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Supplemental Project List for the City of Bishop**
- 4.6 **Approve Amendment No. 2 to Professional Services Agreement with Alta Planning and Design for the Provision of Trails Planning Services for the Eastern Sierra Towns-to-Trails Plan**
- 4.7 **Approve Amendment No. 1 to Professional Services Agreement with Kate Morley for the Provision of Administrative Services**

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Lynn Boulton spoke about Item #4.6 Town to Trails, with regard to the maps that would be used for this project and requested that an ArcGIS map with layers be used rather than story maps.

There was discussion between Ms. Boulton and members of the Board.

5. **POLICY MATTERS**

5.1 **Receive a Presentation from Aaron Wilcher, Inyo Mono UCCE Community Economic Development Advisor on a Discussion of Regional Needs and Partnership Opportunities**

Inyo Mono University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) Community Economic Development Advisor Aaron Wilcher outlined the information in the UCCE Eastern Sierra Regional Needs Assessment Partnership presentation.

There was discussion between Mr. Wilcher and members of the Board.

5.2 **Introduce Kate Morley, ESCOG Administration Assistant**

Executive Director Elaine Kabala introduced the ESCOG's Administrative Assistant Kate Morley.

Ms. Morley spoke about her background and said that she looked forward to supporting Ms. Kabala, the ESCOG, and their partners.

There was discussion between Ms. Morley, Ms. Kabala, and members of the Board.

5.3 **Consider Concept Application for the U.S. Department of Transportation Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program and Adopt a Resolution of the Board of Directors of the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments Authorizing the**

Executive Director Elaine Kabala outlined the information in the staff report.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Caltrans District 9 Senior Environmental Planner Neil Peacock and Regional Funding Specialist Catherine Carr provided additional information about the program.

There was discussion between Ms. Kabala, Mr. Peacock, Ms. Carr and members of the Board.

Moved by Board Member John Wentworth
Seconded by Board Member Trina Orrill

Adopt the Resolution of the Board of Directors of the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments Authorizing the Executive Director to Submit an

Application for the U.S. Department of Transportation Reconnecting Communities Grant.

For (7): Chair Bob Gardner, Vice Chair Stephen Muchovej, Board Member Trina Orrill, Board Member Lynda Salcido, Board Member John Wentworth, Board Member Chris Bubser, and Board Member Karen Schwartz

Absent (1): Board Member Jeff Griffiths

Carried (7 to 0)

5.4 Adopt a Resolution of the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments to Expand the Program of Work Known as the “ESCOG: Community Economic Resiliency Fund Pilot Program” and Seek Approval from Member Agencies for this Work.

Executive Director Elaine Kabala outlined the information in the staff report.

There was discussion between Ms. Kabala and members of the Board.

Moved by Board Member John Wentworth

Seconded by Vice Chair Stephen Muchovej

Adopt the Resolution of the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments to Expand a Program of Work to be Known as the “ESCOG: Community Economic Resiliency Fund Pilot Program” and to Seek Approval From Member Agencies for this Work.

For (7): Chair Bob Gardner, Vice Chair Stephen Muchovej, Board Member Trina Orrill, Board Member Lynda Salcido, Board Member John Wentworth, Board Member Chris Bubser, and Board Member Karen Schwartz

Absent (1): Board Member Jeff Griffiths

Carried (7 to 0)

5.5 Discuss Regional Advocacy for Eastern Sierra Tri-County Fairgrounds Staffing Sustainability

Councilmember Stephen Muchovej led a discussion around his concerns about staffing and appointment of the new Board for the Eastern Sierra Tri-County Fairgrounds.

There was discussion between Executive Director Elaine Kabala and members of the Board.

Staff was given direction to start thinking about the importance of the regional need for the Tri-County Fairgrounds, attend the Inyo County Board of Supervisors meeting on September 3rd which would include an item with the current Interim Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) of the Fairgrounds, Michael Francesconi, on hand to answer questions, and to draft a letter of support of the Fairgrounds.

5.6 Executive Director Update Report

Executive Director Elaine Kabala outlined the information in the staff report. Ms. Kabala also added that the California Transportation Commission would be in Bishop on September 25th and 26th and that it would be a good opportunity for our elected representatives to meet with the Commission. She said that September 25th was also the best date for a strategic planning session, and that she was working with the Institute for Local Government (ILG) to develop a survey to pre inform some of the conversation which would be sent to Board and regional leadership prior to the planning session and requested that the survey be returned to her within the next ten days. She said that Inyo County had been working with the Forest Service and Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) on actionable recommendations related to the Buttermilk Infrastructure and Recreation Planning Initiative (BIRPI). Ms. Kabala reported that she had forwarded letters to the editor that she had received from Lynn Boulton regarding the Towns to Trails Project and said that she had an in person discussion with Ms. Boulton and Board Member Chris Bubser. Ms. Kabala provided an update on regional housing needs assessment and announced that there was a grant available from the Federal Environmental Protection Act (EPA) for Technical Assistance for local planning work specific to identifying opportunities to connect economic development associated with sustainable recreation and gateway communities to downtown revitalization. She said that she was considering attending the Cal Forward Conference in Sacramento in October if the Board was in support of that.

There was discussion between Ms. Kabala and members of the Board.

6. BOARD MEMBER/AGENCY REPORTS

Board Member John Wentworth spoke about the euthanization of a bear in Mammoth.

Town of Mammoth Lakes (TOML) Town Manager Rob Patterson spoke about an incident between a bear and a camper in the Lakes Basin which resulted in the camper being injured and unfortunately, the bear being euthanized by lethal injection by the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW). Mr. Patterson said there would be a detailed discussion at the September 4th Town of Mammoth Lakes Town Council meeting with representation from DFW Leadership and said the Town would be working on educating the public about how to act around bears.

Board Member Stephen Muchovej asked Mr. Patterson if there was any enforcement in place regarding the behavior of campers around bears. Mr. Muchovej requested that the Town have further discussions with the DFW with regard to the process of the disposal of euthanized bears. He said that the tribe ended up getting the bear and giving it a proper burial. Mr. Muchovej reported that the California Transportation Commission would be in Bishop next month and that some of the members of the Local Transportation Commission (LTC) would meet with them. He said that the City of Bishop had been hit with a few disasters recently, including the Willow Street Fire and said that the volunteer firefighters should be commended for their efforts which kept it from spreading within town. He requested that during disaster situations members of the public not mob the scene to look at it, as they get in the way of the first responders. He reported that there was also a fire at the Bishop High School gymnasium, and that during the high wind events last weekend a section of the high school roof blew off. Mr. Muchovej said that the City would need to address many Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) in the near future.

Board Member Karen Schwartz announced that the Tri-County Fair would be held this weekend, and spoke about the importance of building and safety rules.

Board Member Chris Bubser thanked the Bishop tribe that had reached out and to give the bear a proper send off and for issuing a press release about it.

Chair Bob Gardner reported that the Mono County Board of Supervisors (MCBOS) would finalize their budget in September. Chair Gardner said the Board would look at setting priorities including housing, childcare, and a bottle ban which would parallel Mammoth Lakes' ban. He said he had spoken with representatives from the Forest Service about the Mono Basin Visitor Center Building and its need for repairs.

Board Member John Wentworth provided an election update for Mammoth and reported that only two candidates, Bill Sauser and Brent Truax, had pulled papers for the two seats that would be open on the Town Council, therefore, Mr. Sauser would be reappointed, and Mr. Truax would be appointed as a new Town Councilmember.

Chair Bob Gardner reported that the County would have a 3% Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) increase on the ballot and said that Mammoth would have a 2% TOT increase, as well as Fire and School increases on the ballot.

Board Member Stephen Muchovej reported that the Bishop Unified School District would have two increases on the ballot for building improvements, one for the elementary school, and the other for both the high school and middle school. Mr. Muchovej said that there were six people running for the three open seats on the Bishop City Council.

Board Member Tina Orrill reported that there would be a 5th District Supervisor runoff on the ballot for Inyo County and clarified that Round Valley residents would vote on the high school bond, but not the elementary school bond.

There was discussion between Mr. Patterson and members of the Board.

7. REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

There were no future agenda items requested.

The Board went into recess at 10:25 a.m.

8. CLOSED SESSION

The Board went into Closed Session at 10:35 a.m.

8.1 Public Employee Performance Evaluation – Pursuant to Government Code §54957 – Title: Executive Director

The Board reconvened from Closed Session at 11:07 a.m. and announced that there was no reportable action taken.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:11 a.m. to a special meeting scheduled to be held on September 25, 2024.

Angela Plaisted, Assistant Clerk



Eastern Sierra Council of Governments (ESCOG) - Joint Powers Authority (JPA)

Minutes of Special Meeting

September 25, 2024, 8:30 a.m.

Clint Quilter County Office Building Room 103

1360 North Main Street

Bishop, CA 93514

Members Present: Vice Chair Stephen Muchovej, Board Member Jeff Griffiths, Board Member Trina Orrill, Board Member Lynda Salcido, Board Member John Wentworth, Board Member Chris Bubser

Members Absent: Chair Bob Gardner, Board Member Karen Schwartz

1. **CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

Vice Chair Stephen Muchovej called the meeting to order at 8:37 a.m. at the Clint Quilter County Office Building Room 103, Bishop, California.

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Supervisor Trina Orrill led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments given at this time.

4. **POLICY MATTERS**

4.1 **Eastern Sierra Council of Governments Strategic Planning Meeting**

The Board participated in a strategic planning workshop facilitated by Institute for Local Government (ILG) Senior Program Manager Melissa Kuehne and Program Manager Hanna Stelmakhovych.

The Board went into recess at 10:17 a.m.

The Board Reconvened at 10:28 a.m.

5. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:06 p.m.

Angela Plaisted, Assistant Clerk



Eastern Sierra Council of Governments (ESCOG) Joint Powers Authority Agenda

STAFF REPORT

To: ESCOG Joint Powers Authority
From: Scott Armstrong, Regional Broadband Coordinator
Subject: Informational Broadband Update
Meeting date: October 23, 2024
Prepared on: October 17, 2024

Attachments: none

The following report provides information and updates associated with regional broadband activities. I would be happy to discuss these topics or any other broadband-related topics in more detail at your convenience.

General Broadband News:

The Inyo-Mono Broadband Consortium website (<https://ConnectedEasternSierra.net/>) includes broadband-related information for customers and Internet Service providers in our region. The site includes information and links to a variety of tools, such as grant-specific information, speed tests, service issue reporting, and different broadband maps to view Internet service availability and report discrepancies.

Grants Information:

FFA & Infrastructure Grant (Construction):

As of the latest FFA Awards update on October 4, CPUC Last-Mile Federal Funding Account (FFA) project applications have been awarded for projects in 27 Counties so far, including the Golden State Connect Authority applications for project areas in Mono County and the Town of Mammoth Lakes (Convict Lake to McGee Creek, June Lake, and Mammoth and the Lakes Basin in Mono County). Project applications in another 6 Counties have been recommended for award in upcoming CPUC voting meetings.

The remaining grant applications are still being reviewed, with priority for review given to those project areas connecting to the planned State's Middle-Mile Broadband Network (MMBN). The FFA project applications in Inyo County (Aspendell, Starlite, South Lake, Lone Pine, Alabama Hills, and Pearsonville) submitted by Frontier do not connect to the MMBN, but the likelihood that they will be approved is very good, since there were no competing applications and since the total amount of the projects in Inyo County was well within the amount of FFA funding allocated for the County.

The CPUC's [Federal Funding Account Awards and Recommendations](#) page provides a visual depiction of Counties with project applications that have been awarded, but that doesn't mean that all project applications in those Counties have been awarded. There are several project applications that do not connect to the MMBN that have not yet been evaluated, and some project applications overlap, requiring additional evaluation. A full listing of approved FFA and Local Agency Technical Assistance project applications is on the CPUC's [Broadband Portal](#) page.

BEAD (Construction and Digital Equity):

The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) process for the State of California is completing the CPUC's final determination of any rebuttals to challenges of location eligibility and will be submitting that information to the NTIA in November. Our regional NTIA representative is expecting the State to open the sub-grant application window for BEAD project areas in the spring of 2025.

USDA BTA 2023 (Technical Assistance only, no construction):

The network-design Projects for Hammil (Mono County) and Furnace Creek (Inyo County) are still in the early stages, with a design contract in development for the Furnace Creek area and an RFP ready to post for the Hammil area.

Middle-Mile Broadband Initiative (MMBI)

The construction in southeastern Inyo to connect Death Valley is still on hold as a result of State Budget cuts, but the network segment remains part of the overall project. The expectation is that when funding is available, it will be allocated for the approximately 2,000 miles of network segments that have been put on hold.

The State's purchase of the California Broadband Cooperative Digital 395 network is expected to close on October 31, 2024, and will include a list of agreements that are still being processed. State is working with Inyo Networks / Onward to develop a Managed Services Agreement to maintain the network, and the California Broadband Cooperative will continue to provide last-mile services to current customers.

BUDGET IMPACTS:

None.

LEGAL REVIEW:

Not applicable.

RECOMMENDATION:

None, informational only.



**Eastern Sierra Council of Governments (ESCOG)
Joint Powers Authority Agenda**

STAFF REPORT

To: ESCOG Joint Powers Authority
From: Elaine Kabala, Executive Director
Subject: Receive Findings and Corrective Action Plan from Caltrans Pre-Award Audit
Meeting date: October 23, 2024
Prepared on: October 15, 2024
Attachments: A) None

BACKGROUND/HISTORY:

As a requirement of the Highway-to-Boulevards Grant the ESCOG pursued in September 2023, ESCOG was required to undergo a pre-award audit. The pre-award audit is a requirement for the ESCOG to enter into a grant agreement with Caltrans. The Caltrans Internal Audits Office has provided the findings of their audit, as well as a corrective action plan for the findings.

Corrective actions required to be completed by February 28, 2025 include:

- Attending Local Agency Architectural & Engineering (A&E) Contract Procurement Training
- Adopting Chapter 10 of the Local Assistance Procedures Manual by resolution
- Providing updated grant management procedures, specifically adding secondary verification of staff timesheets for time spent on grants

BUDGET IMPACTS:

None.

LEGAL REVIEW:

ESCOG Counsel Grace Chuchla has reviewed this item and found that it complies with the law.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the Board receive the findings and recommendations from Caltrans Pre-Award Audit.

MEMORANDUM

TO: **Dee Lam**
Division Chief,
Division of Local Assistance (DLA)

FROM: **Ben Shelton**
Audit Chief,
Caltrans Internal Audits Office (CIAO)

DATE: 6/13/2024

FILE #: 24PRE.02

SUBJECT: Pre-Award Audit of Eastern Sierra Council of Governments – Final Report Attached



Caltrans Internal Audits Office (CIAO), California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), audited the financial management system (FMS) of the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments (ESCOG), a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) between the Town of Mammoth Lakes, City of Bishop, Inyo County and Mono County. The scope of the audit was limited to reviewing and testing of ESCOG's FMS which includes payroll, accounts payable, and procurement and contract management. Auditors tested the FMS internal controls, and more specifically evaluated the ability of ESCOG's accounting system to determine if it could accumulate and segregate reasonable and allowable costs that can be allocated to projects. The final audit report does not include a response from ESCOG as they did not provide one to CIAO.

Based on the audit, CIAO determined ESCOG's accounting system does accumulate and allocate reasonable and allowable project costs however, auditors found the following deficiencies:

- ESCOG does not verify staff's timesheets (Excel tracking) for the time spent working on the grants.
- ESCOG receives proposals directly through e-mail.
- ESCOG does not verify for debarment/suspensions in their procurement process.
- ESCOG has a potential conflict of interest identified.

Please provide CIAO with a Corrective Action Plan, including the timelines for addressing the recommendations in the report, within 60 business days from the date of this memo. If you have any questions, or if you would like to request a paper copy of this report, please contact me, by phone: (916) 858-9694 or by e-mail: Audits@dot.ca.gov.

ATTACHMENT: ESCOG Pre-Award - 24PRE.A02 - Final Report

MEMORANDUM

Cc:

Elaine Kabala, Executive Director, ESCOG
Janet Dutcher, Fiscal Agent, ESCOG
KC Handren, Deputy Director, Administration and Financial Management,
California Transportation Commission
Mark Samuelson, Deputy Division Chief, DLA, Caltrans
Seree "Mack" Yenjai, Acting Chief, Office of Guidance and Oversight, DLA,
Caltrans
Ryan Dermody, Director, District 9, Caltrans
Kirsten Helton, Division of Planning and Environmental, Deputy Division Chief,
District 9, Caltrans
Mark Heckman, DLAE, Local Assistance Branch, District 9, Caltrans
Bing Luu, A&E Oversight Program Manager, Office of Guidance and
Oversight, DLA, Caltrans
Daniel Burke, Supervisor, Program Reviews and Outreach Branch, , Office of
Guidance and Oversight, DLA, Caltrans
Felicia Haslem, Chief, Office of Project Management Oversight - North, DLA,
Caltrans
Darlene Wulff, LoCode Coordinator, Office of Project Management Oversight,
Caltrans
Blair Thompson, Chief, Division of Risk and Strategic Management, Caltrans
Gerald Lee, Audit Manager, CIAO, Caltrans
<california.lpa@dot.gov>



CALTRANS INTERNAL AUDITS OFFICE

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



CALTRANS INTERNAL AUDITS OFFICE

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

FINAL REPORT: EASTERN SIERRA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS, PRE-AWARD AUDIT

Submission Date: 6/13/2024

Requested by: Division of Local Assistance (DLA)

Prepared by: Caltrans Internal Audits Office (CIAO)



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Attachments

- **Attachment A:** Documentation of the Auditee's Non-Response

AUDIT REPORT PREPARED BY: Caltrans Internal Audits Office (CIAO)



AUDIT TEAM:

Ben Shelton, Audit Chief
Gerald Lee, Audit Manager, Auditor-in-Charge
Mia Gomez, Auditor

AUDIT #24PRE.A02

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Department of Transportation
Caltrans Internal Audits Office
1120 N Street, Sacramento, CA 95814
Audits@dot.ca.gov

SUMMARY

The Caltrans Internal Audits Office (CIAO), California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), audited the payroll, accounts payable, and procurement processes of the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments (ESCOG). ESCOG is a joint powers authority (JPA) made up of 4 member agencies: the County of Inyo, County of Mono, City of Bishop, and the Town of Mammoth Lakes. CIAO found that ESCOG's financial system accumulates, and segregates costs based on project and funding profiles. During the audit process, CIAO found issues of non-compliance with ESCOG's payroll and procurements processes. The finding with procurement concerned proposals, debarment/suspensions, and conflict of interest; and the finding with payroll involved timesheet verifications.

AUDIT OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the audit are to determine whether:

- ESCOG's accounting system is capable of accumulating and segregating reasonable, allocable, and allowable project costs.
- ESCOG's policies, procedures, and internal controls are adequate to support entering into State Master Agreements.

AUDIT SCOPE

The scope of the audit was limited to reviewing and testing ESCOG's financial management system—which includes payroll, accounts payable and procurement. Auditors tested the financial management system's internal controls and evaluated the ability of ESCOG's accounting system to determine if it could accumulate and segregate reasonable, allocable, and allowable costs that can be effectively allocated to projects.

Auditors tested ESCOG's procurement process. The audit consisted of inquiries to ESCOG's personnel to acquire an understanding of ESCOG's financial management system, and to evaluate its compliance with Title 2 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 180 and 200, Public Contracting Code (PCC), State Administrative Manual (SAM), Master Agreement - Article V, and Local Assistance Procedure Manual (LAPM). The audit was limited to financial and compliance activities of the 2020-2023 fiscal years. Testing was completed on April 19, 2024.

Changes to the Financial Management System (FMS) after April 19, 2024, were not tested and, accordingly, the financial statements. Therefore, they are not expressing an opinion on ESCOG's financial statements.

METHODOLOGY

This audit was conducted in accordance with the Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards. Auditors believe the evidence obtained in accordance with those standards provides a reasonable basis for findings and conclusions based on the audit objectives. The audit was less in-scope than an audit performed for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the financial statements of the ESCOG. Auditors did not audit the financial statements and are therefore not expressing an opinion on them.

The audit consisted of interviewing ESCOG's personnel, reviewing prior audit reports, and requesting information from ESCOG's personnel to gain an understanding of ESCOG's financial management system. CIAO evaluated its compliance with Title 2 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 200, Public Contracting Code (PCC), and Local Assistance Procedure Manual (LAPM). CIAO also tested the internal controls, the procurement process, and evaluated the accounting system's ability to accumulate and segregate reasonable, allocable, and allowable costs that can be effectively allocated to projects.

VIEWS OF RESPONSIBLE OFFICIALS

CIAO issued the draft report, dated, May 21, 2024, and requested a written response from the auditee by May 28, 2024. CIAO did not receive a response by May 28, 2024. Auditors did their due diligence to contact ESCOG by phone and e-mail and provided an extension for the response to be provided by June 12, 2024. Auditors did not receive a response from the auditee by June 12, 2024. As a result, the findings and recommendations remain unchanged. A copy of the e-mail thread is included in this report as Attachment A.

If you have additional questions, please contact Ben Shelton, Audit Chief, by phone: (916)858-9694, or by e-mail: Audits@dot.ca.gov.

CONCLUSION

Based on the audit, CIAO determined ESCOG'S accounting system does accumulate and segregate project costs. However, auditors found the following deficiencies:

1. ESCOG does not verify staff's timesheets (Excel tracking) for the time spent working on the grants.
2. ESCOG receives proposals directly through e-mail.

3. ESCOG does not verify for debarment/suspensions in their procurement process.
4. Potential conflict of interest identified: an ESCOG board member was working directly on the SNC Grant with position in Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access (MLTPA); MLTPA is partnering with Alta Planning + Design for the SNC Grant.
 - o The ESCOG board member signed original contract with Alta Planning + Design, SNC grant.
 - o The ESCOG board member voted on amendment #1 for the Alta Contract, SNC Grant, to allow for travel and per diem costs.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDING ONE: PROCUREMENT

SUMMARY OF FINDING

During review of ESCOG's procurement process, auditors identified ESCOG lacked training in procurement policies, which hindered staff to procure consultant contracts in accordance with Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) requirements. Specifically, the following deficiencies were noted in their procurement procedures:

- ESCOG receives proposals directly through e-mail.
- ESCOG does not verify for debarment/suspensions in their procurement process.
- Potential conflict of interest identified: an ESCOG board member was working directly on the SNC Grant with position in Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access (MLTPA); MLTPA is partnering with Alta Planning + Design for the SNC Grant. 2 areas of potential issues were noted:
 - The ESCOG board member signed original contract with Alta Planning + Design, SNC grant.
 - The ESCOG board member voted on amendment #1 for the Alta Contract, SNC Grant, to allow for travel and per diem costs.

Without adequate and updated procurement procedures, ESCOG cannot ensure that proposals received and awarded are fair and open to competition, nor can they ensure contract management is fair and reasonable.

CRITERIA

Title 2, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 200 excerpts:

2 CFR 200.206(d): Suspension and debarment compliance:

(1) The Federal awarding agency must comply with the guidelines on governmentwide suspension and debarment in 2 CFR part 180 and must require non-Federal entities to comply with these provisions. These provisions restrict Federal awards, subawards and contracts with certain parties that are debarred, suspended, or otherwise excluded from or ineligible for participation in Federal programs or activities.

2 CFR 200.318- General Procurement Standards:

(c)(1) The non-Federal entity must maintain written standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the actions of its employees engaged in the selection, award, and administration of contracts. No employee, officer, or agent may participate in the selection, award, or administration of a contract supported by a Federal award if he or she has a real or apparent conflict of interest.

Local Assistance Procedure Manual (LAPM):LAPM 10.1.1 – General: Organizational and Consultant Conflicts of Interest:

Federal Regulation Governing Conflict of Interest (23 CFR 172.7(b)(4)) requires that:

- No contracting agency employee who participates in the procurement, management, or administration of federal-funded contracts or subcontracts must have, directly or indirectly, any financial or other personal interest in connection with such contract or subcontract.
- No person or entity performing services for a contracting agency in connection with a federal-funded project must have, directly or indirectly, any financial or other personal interest, other than employment or retention by the contracting agency, in any contract or subcontract in connection with such project.
- No person or entity performing services for a contracting agency in connection with a federal-aid highway funded project must have, directly or indirectly, any financial or other personal interest in any real property acquired for the project.

LAPM 10.1.8 – Completing the Project: Review and Approval of Contracts:

Before approving a contract for consulting services, the Contract Administrator must be satisfied that the consultant's organization:

- Is not disbarred or suspended from state or federally funded contracts. Per 23 CFR 172.7(b)(3) "A contracting agency shall verify suspension and debarment actions and eligibility status of consultants and subconsultants prior to entering into an agreement or contract in accordance with 2 CFR 1200 and 2 CFR 180."

LAPM 10.3 – Non-A&E Contracts: Additional Requirements and EvaluationCriteria:

- A. Local Public Agency (LPA) must require consultants to submit their proposals and costs in a separate, sealed envelope.
- B. LPA must determine those that meet the format requirements and the standards specified in the Request for Proposal (RFP).

- C. The sealed envelopes containing the price and cost information for those proposals that meet the format requirements and standards must be publicly opened and read.
(PCC 10344(b))

PCC 10344(b):

(b) State agencies that use the evaluation and selection procedure in this subdivision shall include in the request for proposal, in addition to the information required by subdivision (a), a requirement that bidders submit their proposals with the bid price and all cost information in a separate, sealed envelope.

Proposals shall be evaluated, and the contract awarded in the following manner:

- (1) All proposals received shall be reviewed to determine those that meet the format requirements and the standards specified in the request for proposal.
- (2) The sealed envelopes containing the bid price and cost information for those proposals that meet the format requirements and standards shall then be publicly opened and read.
- (3) The contract shall be awarded to the lowest responsible bidder meeting the standards.

CIAO RECOMMENDATIONS

1. CIAO recommends ESCOG key personnel complete the Caltrans, Division of Local Assistance's (DLA) Procurement training to ensure that procedures are followed in accordance with Federal and State requirements.
2. CIAO recommends ESCOG adopt Chapter 10 of the LAPM for procurement using State and Federal transportation Funds.

AUDITEE'S RESPONSE

ESCOG did not respond to the findings and recommendations by the extended deadline of June 12, 2024.

FINDING TWO: PAYROLL

SUMMARY OF FINDING

During review of ESCOG's payroll process, auditors identified ESCOG staff lacked controls in payroll policies. Specifically, the following deficiency was noted in their payroll procedures:

- ESCOG does not verify staff's timesheets (Excel tracking) for the time spent working on the grants.

Without adequate and updated payroll procedures, ESCOG cannot ensure that timesheets for time spent on grants are being accurately charged.

CRITERIA

Local Assistance Procedure Manual (LAPM), Chapter 4:

Exhibit 4-C: Master Agreement – Administering Agency-State Agreement for Federal-Aid Projects, Article V:

2. ADMINISTERING AGENCY, its contractors and subcontractors shall establish and maintain a financial management system and records that properly accumulate and segregate reasonable, allowable, and allocable incurred PROJECT costs and matching funds by line item for the PROJECT. The financial management system of ADMINISTERING AGENCY, its contractors and all subcontractors shall conform to Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, enable the determination of incurred costs at interim points of completion, and provide support for reimbursement payment vouchers or invoices sent to or paid by STATE.

CIAO RECOMMENDATION

1. CIAO recommends ESCOG add a supervising signature approval line to the excel timesheet template used for grant work.

AUDITEE'S RESPONSE

ESCOG did not respond to the findings and recommendations by the extended deadline of June 12, 2024.

ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT A:
DOCUMENTATION OF THE
AUDITEE'S NON-RESPONSE

From: [Lee, Gerald C@DOT](mailto:Lee_Gerald_C@DOT)
To: [Gomez, Mia@DOT](mailto:Gomez_Mia@DOT); [Elaine Kabala \(ESCOG\)](mailto:Elaine_Kabala_(ESCOG))
Cc: [Shelton, Ben@DOT](mailto:Shelton_Ben@DOT); [Lee, Gerald C@DOT](mailto:Lee_Gerald_C@DOT)
Subject: RE: ESCOG - Draft Report
Date: Monday, June 3, 2024 5:04:25 PM

Good afternoon Elaine,

I called and left a voicemail. I am following up if you have any questions about the draft report. Please respond back to our draft or if you have any questions about the draft. If we do not get a response by June 12th, CIAO will proceed with the final report.

Gerald Lee

Audit Manager – Caltrans Internal Audits Office,
Division of Risk and Strategic Management



Department of Transportation
Administration, MS 80
1120 N Street, Sacramento, CA 95814
Cell phone: [redacted]
(He/Him/His)

Please visit our website:
[redacted]

From: [Gomez, Mia@DOT](mailto:Gomez_Mia@DOT) [redacted]
Sent: Friday, May 31, 2024 11:32 AM
To: [Elaine Kabala \(ESCOG\)](mailto:Elaine_Kabala_(ESCOG)) [redacted]
Cc: [Lee, Gerald C@DOT](mailto:Lee_Gerald_C@DOT) [redacted]; [Shelton, Ben@DOT](mailto:Shelton_Ben@DOT) [redacted]
Subject: RE: ESCOG - Draft Report

Good afternoon Elaine,

Just following up with you since we haven't heard back with your response with the ESCOG draft report. I tried giving you a call, but I was unable to reach you. Just wanted to reach out here to see if you need any help or if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you so much,

Mia Gomez

Auditor – Caltrans Internal Audits Office,

Division of Risk and Strategic Management



Department of Transportation
Administration, MS 80
1120 N Street, Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone: [redacted]

From: Gomez, Mia@DOT
Sent: Tuesday, May 21, 2024 2:49 PM
To: [Elaine Kabala \(ESCOG\) \[redacted\]](#); [Janet Dutcher \[redacted\]](#)
Cc: [Lee, Gerald C@DOT \[redacted\]](#)
Subject: ESCOG - Draft Report

Good afternoon,

As discussed during the field exit meeting on May 15th, the attached draft report is ready for your review. Please provide your response within five business days, on or before May 28th. Also, let us know if you prefer to have a formal exit meeting to go over the draft report or if you would like to forego it.

Thank you so much!

Mia Gomez
Auditor – Caltrans Internal Audits Office,
Division of Risk and Strategic Management



Department of Transportation
Administration, MS 80
1120 N Street, Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone: [redacted]



CALTRANS INTERNAL AUDITS OFFICE

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

*Administration, MS 80
1120 N Street,
Sacramento, CA, 95814*

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California Department of Transportation

DIVISION OF LOCAL ASSISTANCE
P.O. BOX 942874, MS-1 | SACRAMENTO, CA 94274-0001
(916) 653-8620 | FAX (916) 654-2409 TTY 711
www.dot.ca.gov/programs/local-assistance



September 25, 2024

Elaine Kabala
Executive Director
Eastern Sierra Council of Governments
P.O. Box 1609
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Dear Ms. Kabala:

This letter serves as the California Department of Transportation's (Caltrans) Division of Local Assistance (DLA) corrective action plan for the findings described in the Pre-Award Audit, File 24PRE.A02, for Eastern Sierra Council of Governments (ESCOG) dated June 13, 2024.

FINDING 1 – Procurement

ESCOG's procurement policies need to be updated to ensure compliance with Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) requirements.

Corrective Actions Required by February 28, 2025:

1. Ensure appropriate staff attend the Local Agency Architectural & Engineering (A&E) Contract Procurement training to become more familiar with the updated procedures in Chapter 10 of the Local Assistance Procedures Manual (LAPM). ESCOG must submit a list of staff who attended the DLA A&E webinar for verification. The A&E training webinar is available at the below website:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dif3qdXKRco>
2. Adopt Chapter 10 of the LAPM. Since DLA updates the LAPM annually, it is suggested our partners use language adopting future versions as part of their procedures as a best practice. Chapter 10 of the LAPM and future updates located here:
<https://dot.ca.gov/-/media/dot-media/programs/local-assistance/documents/lapm/ch10.pdf>

FINDING 2 – Payroll

ESCOG does not verify staff's timesheets for the time spent working on the grants.

Corrective Actions Required by February 28, 2025:

3. Within five months of the CAP letter, ESCOG will be required to provide updated grant management procedures. Updates to procedures are to include, but not be limited to additional verification of timesheets for time spent on grants. This may include adding a step to for supervisor approval of the timesheet.

ESCOG will submit the updated grant management procedures to DLA for review and approval prior to implementation.

Paula Vargas will be in contact with ESCOG to discuss the corrective actions in further detail. You may contact Paula Joy Vargas directly at paula.vargas@dot.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



Dee Lam
Chief, Division of Local Assistance

- c: California.LPA@dot.gov, Audits Inbox, Federal Highway Administration
KC Handren, Deputy Director, Administration and Financial Management,
California Transportation Commission
Ryan Dermody, Director, District 9, Caltrans
Kirsten Helton, Deputy Division Chief, Division of Planning and Environmental,
District 9, Caltrans
Mark Heckman, District Local Assistance Engineer, Local Assistance Branch, Division
of Planning and Environmental, District 9, Caltrans
Seree Yenjai, Acting Chief, Office of Guidance and Oversight, Division of Local
Assistance, Caltrans
Trina Luo, Acting Program Manager, Architecture & Engineering Oversight Branch,
Office of Guidance and Oversight, Division of Local Assistance, Caltrans
Ben Shelton, Chief, Caltrans Internal Audits Office, Division of Risk and Strategic
Management, Caltrans



California Department of Food and Agriculture
Division of Fairs & Expositions
1220 N Street
Sacramento, California, U.S.A. 95814

Dear Board of Directors,

I am writing on behalf of the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments to express the vital importance of the Tri-County Fairgrounds as a community center, economic driver, and regional resiliency hub for the Eastern Sierra region. As a key institution, the Fairgrounds plays an integral role as community center, a regionally serving events center, a cultural hub and a critical resource for regional emergency preparedness.

The Fairgrounds not only provides a venue for the celebration of local culture, history, and agriculture, but it also serves as a central gathering space for community members from Inyo, Mono, and Alpine Counties. It is a unique facility where public events, educational programs, and recreational activities unite residents, visitors, and businesses alike. The significance of this facility cannot be overstated, as it contributes to the social fabric of our region and generates substantial economic benefits through events that define our community, including the Labor Day Fair and Bishop's namesake Mule Days celebration.

Moreover, the Tri-County Fairgrounds plays a pivotal role in regional resilience. During emergency event, the Tri-County Fairs serves as the emergency operations center, providing a central place for organizations such as the Red Cross to mobilize, shelter for persons who have been evacuated, and livestock facilities for evacuated animals. The Fairgrounds also was the central location for COVID-19 testing during the pandemic. The ability of the Fairgrounds to quickly pivot and provide necessary services during emergencies, including wildfire evacuations and public health crises, underscores its value as an essential asset for the region's safety and well-being.

Given the Tri-County Fairgrounds' essential functions, we strongly emphasize the need for prompt appointments to the 18th D.A.A. Board of Directors. The timely and strategic appointment of new board members is crucial to ensuring the continued success of the facility and the organization as a whole. We also request transparency into the appointment process because of its significance and visibility in our small community. Effective leadership is key to advancing the Fairgrounds' mission, appointing key administrative staff, securing adequate funding, and ensuring its long-term sustainability. A fully staffed board will enable the organization to continue its work as a cornerstone of our community and to plan effectively for the future, addressing both current operational needs and long-term development opportunities.

We respectfully urge you to prioritize the prompt appointment of board members who are committed to fostering the Fairgrounds' role as a community and economic driver, while also advancing its capacity as a regional resiliency center. The Tri-County Fairgrounds is not only a



beloved institution but also a critical resource for the entire Eastern Sierra region, and its continued success is dependent on robust governance and strong leadership.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to your support in ensuring that the Tri-County Fairgrounds can continue to thrive and serve our community.

Sincerely,

Bob Gardner

Chair, Eastern Sierra Council of Governments



STAFF REPORT

To: ESCOG Joint Powers Authority
From: Elaine Kabala, ESCOG Staff
Subject: Contract Amendment No. 1 to CDFW Grant Q2196015 Eastern Sierra Pace and Scale Agreement

Meeting date: February 28, 2024

Prepared on: February 21, 2024

Attachments: A) Contract Amendment No. 1 to CDFW Grant Q2196015 Eastern Sierra Pace and Scale Agreement

BACKGROUND/HISTORY:

At the February ESCOG meeting, the Board provided direction to staff to request a grant agreement amendment from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to reallocated unspent funding under the current CDFW Proposition 1 grant award to fund additional environmental planning tasks, specifically expansion of the Eastern Sierra Communities and Climate Resiliency Project into the Mono Basin.

Staff has negotiated an amended scope of work and budget with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to accommodate this work.

ANALYSIS:

The amendment proposes to use excess funds to expand the existing scope of work to include early environmental planning tasks toward expanding the ESCCRP (Part I- acres around Mammoth Lakes) northward into adjacent acres in the Mono Basin (ESCCRP Part2). This expansion would effectively double the ESCCRP planning footprint and address additional needs for source water protection and other co-benefits in the Mono Basin, a watershed of substantial environmental significance in the region and for the City of Los Angeles and equally important the homelands of the Mono Lake Kutzadika'a people.

Specifically, this agreement amendment seeks to expand the scope of work in three areas. First, the requested amendment will modify subtask 3.3 – Silvicultural Assessment by specifying the deliverables and shifting completion of the task from the USFS to ESCOG's subcontractor

Whitebark Institute. This amendment with ESCOG's subcontractor Whitebark Institute was previously considered and approved by the ESCOG Board.

Second, the project seeks to expand the footprint of environmental planning beyond the initial study area in the upper Owens Watershed, now 58,000 acres northward to include a significant portion of the western Mono Basin, that could potentially add another 50,000 acres to the ESCCRP Part 2 via a second effort of planning. Land ownership in the Mono Basin differs substantially from the Upper Owens which is dominated by Federal Ownership. There are approximately 10,000 acres of non-federally owned lands that will require CEQA or an equivalent environmental compliance process to advance vegetation management needs to help protect communities and other valuable high value resources in the project area. The expanded scope below begins to address those additional planning needs for the northward expansion to the Mono Basin.

The request includes the addition of two subtasks to accomplish additional planning work: Subtask 3.8 – NEPA pre-development tasks and Subtask 3.9 - CalVTP Supplemental Studies for CEQA compliance. Finally, the amendment requests to extend the project timeline from March 15, 2025 to December 31, 2026 to allow for completion of the expanded scope of work.

There is no budget increase requested as part of this amendment request. All scope expansion items are contingent upon schedule extension. The requested scope of work expansion resulting in delivering CEQA documents for Lee Vining and Mono City is contingent upon a budget increase to both environmental planning tasks and the Inyo National Forest subcontracts. The budget allocation for ESCOG's current subcontractor to provide environmental planning tasks can be accommodated within the Environmental Planning line item, however facilitating the Inyo National Forest's (INF) participation will require shifting \$210,000 from environmental planning to the INF Subcontract line item. This budget shift is necessary to support the development of proposed actions and other federal actions in partnership with INF.

BUDGET IMPACTS:

The amendment extends the terms of the agreement, allowing ESCOG to more fully utilize awarded funds. No increases are proposed by this amendment.

LEGAL REVIEW:

ESCOG Counsel Grace Chuchla has reviewed this item and found that it complies with the law.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the ESCOG Board approve Contract Amendment No. 1 to CDFW Grant Q2196015 Eastern Sierra Pace and Scale Agreement



**PROPOSITION 1 WATERSHED RESTORATION GRANT PROGRAM
 EASTERN SIERRA PACE & SCALE ACCELERATOR
 GRANT AGREEMENT NUMBER – Q2196015,01**

GRANTOR: State of California, acting by and through
 The California Department of Fish and Wildlife
 P.O. Box 944209
 Sacramento, CA 94244-2090

GRANTEE: Eastern Sierra Council of Governments
 P.O. Box 1609
 Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

GRANT AMENDMENT

This Grant **Q2195015**, by and between the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Grantor) and Eastern Sierra Council of Governments (Grantee), originally made and entered into on October 13, 2021, is hereby amended upon Grantor approval, in the following particulars and no others:

1. *Section 2, Term, is amended by deleting reference to, “October 13, 2021 through March 15, 2025” there from and inserting, “October 13, 2021 through December 31, 2026” (an increase of eighteen months).*
2. *Section 6.02, Objectives, is replaced in its entirety with the below Section 6.02, Objectives. The revised Objectives includes the new updated project area of 113,000 acres.*

6.02 Objectives: Specific objectives of this Project are to:

- Streamline environmental planning to ensure more efficient and effective vegetation management implementation in the Eastern Sierra Mts.
- Environmental Assessment for 113,000 acres of project area
- Survey data and associated reports for 10,000 priority acres within the ESCCRP
- Facilitate and complete NEPA
- Create and improve Monitoring Plan for the ESCCRP
- Map priority areas for future implementation work
- Confirm CEQA Lead Agency and prepare total ESCCRP area for CEQA

- Plan for Long term financial security for the ESCCRP

3. *Section 6.03.1, Location, is replaced in its entirety with the below Section 6.03.1, Location. The revised Location includes an additional 58,000 acres, which is a total of 113,000 acres in both Mono and Madera Counties.*

6.03.1 Location: The Project is located on approximately 113,000 acres of privately-owned and publicly-owned land located at 37.639590, -118.966360 in Mono and Madera County, California (Project Site).

4. *Section 6.03.3, Project Implementation, is replaced in its entirety with the below Section 6.03.3, Project Implementation. The revised Project Implementation includes the addition of Subtask 3.8 NEPA Pre-development Tasks and Subtask 3.9 CalVTP Supplemental Studies for CEQA Compliance.*

6.03.4 Project Implementation: Consistent with Grantee's proposal for the Project, Grantee will oversee Subcontractor Project Management who will complete the following tasks in accordance with Section 6.03.6 – Schedule of Due Dates and Deliverables:

Task 1 – Project Management and Administration

Grantee will oversee Grantee Personnel staff, including the Grantee Executive Director, Administrative Assistant, and Legal Counsel, & Subcontractor Project Management who will work together to provide technical and administrative services associated with implementation of the Project, including managing this Agreement, assuring all permits are finalized, administering subcontracts, invoicing, and payments, drafting, and finalizing progress and final reports, and data management.

Subtask 1.1 – Data Management

Grantee will oversee Subcontractor Project Management and Subcontractor Environmental Planning who will coordinate data management activities. Grantee shall submit a Data Management Plan. The CDFW Grant Manager will provide Grantee the Data Management Plan form upon request.

Grantee is responsible for ensuring that Project data are collected using peer-approved methods, undergo a quality control and accuracy assessment process, include metadata that meet CDFW's minimum standards (<https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/BIOS/Metadata>) and include documentation of the methods and quality assessments utilized, and are properly stored and protected until the Project has been

completed and data have been delivered as required under this Agreement.

All scientific data collection efforts are required to include metadata files or records indicating at a minimum:

1. Who collected the data;
2. When the data was collected;
3. Where the data was collected;
4. How the data was collected (description of methods and protocols);
5. The purposes for which the data was collected;
6. Definitions of variables, fields, codes, and abbreviations used in the data, including units of measure;
7. The terms of any landowner access agreement(s), if applicable;
8. References to any related CDFW permits or regulatory actions;
9. Peer review or statistical consultation documentation; and
10. Data licensing and disclaimer language.

All data and associated metadata collected by or created under this Agreement are a required deliverable of this Agreement. All data deliverables should be budgeted for and included in the Project timeline as a part of this Agreement. A condition of final payment on this Agreement shall include the delivery of all related data assets. Geospatial data must be delivered in an industry-standard geospatial data format where applicable and documented with metadata in accordance with the CDFW Minimum Metadata Standards.

Data related to observation, occurrence or distribution of state or federal special status species or California Native Plant Society listed species shall be reported to the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) using the online field survey form or other digital method.

Task 2 - Interdisciplinary Team (IDT)

Grantee will oversee the Subcontractor Project Management who will oversee all other subcontractors. An interdisciplinary team (IDT) will be built by the Subcontractor Project Management and Subcontractor Environmental Planning, in partnership with the Inyo National Forest Interdisciplinary Team (USFS). The USFS will mentor and work with IDT to ensure early alignment of Forest Service which will include policies, priorities, as well as resource and local area sensitivities within the project area in alignment with the new Land Management Plan. Federal staff support will include but not limited to the USFS providing content and review of position

descriptions, help recruit, and make hiring recommendations for IDT members, and consult on any questions that arise from performance of NEPA work. USFS through in-kind funds will mentor, help train and support team building, to optimize the new IDT and USFS alignment. Grantee and USFS will ensure that continued collaboration with the USFS occurs.

Task 3 – NEPA & Supporting Documents

Grantee will oversee Subcontractor Project Management and Subcontractor Environmental Planning and the USFS to schedule and conduct surveys. The Subcontractor Environmental Planning will determine applicable Inyo National Forest land and resource management plan components and review for compliance and development of project design features for all assessments and surveys to be conducted. The Subcontractor Environmental Planning will use the data and research gathered to recommend project design features or proposed action modifications or alternatives. The USFS will provide a forester (in-kind) to cover the silvicultural survey and reporting requirements contained within this project scope. Assessments for each discipline will be completed as deliverables to CDFW. Assessments will contain but not limited to the following documents: survey reports, specialist reports, effects analyses, or any other reports required for regulatory agency compliance. Grantee will also submit copies of all necessary permits.

Subtask 3.1 - Botanical Assessment

Grantee will oversee Subcontractor Project Management and Subcontractor Environmental Planning who will complete the Botanical Assessment. The Grantee will submit the Botanical Assessment to CDFW Grant Manager which will include but not limited to:

- Review known information about at-risk species habitat;
- Conduct vegetation mapping, biological surveys, and habitat assessments in priority areas;
- Prepare a Summary Survey Report and GIS---based maps;
- Prepare an analysis of At-risk Plants including habitat evaluation; and
- Prepare a Weed Risk Assessment Report and determine weed spread mitigations.

Subtask 3.2 - Archaeological Assessment

Grantee will oversee Subcontractor Project Management and Subcontractor Environmental Planning who will obtain archaeological research permit from the USFS.

Grantee will:

- Survey priority areas that do not have existing up-to-date records. Record sites utilizing “Historic Property Recording Specifications”;
- Record all newly discovered prehistoric, ethnographic, and historical heritage resources encountered within and directly adjacent to the project area(s);
- Re-record or supplement existing site records as needed based on discrepancies, alterations and impacts observed;
- Record all heritage resource sites using State Historic Preservation Office site forms; and
- Use USFS Region 5 standards to record all site boundaries (resource-grade Global Positioning System (GPS)).

Grantee will assign CA State Trinomial numbers for all sites in project area for inclusion in the Final Report. Grantee will complete Archaeological Project Effects Analysis Report. In-Situ Artifact Recording procedures will be followed during both inventory and site recording activities. Grantee will oversee subcontractor USFS who will consult with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for concurrence on eligibility and effects findings. Grantee will submit proof of the completion of the Archaeological Assessment to the Grant Manager.

Subtask 3.3 - Silvicultural Assessment

Grantee will work with Whitebark Institute Staff who will complete timber stand examinations and summary report of findings. As well as completing fire behavior modeling using fire modeling tools and summarize findings. Develop Silvicultural Project Effects which will include the Silvicultural Prescription based on findings and included in the Silvicultural Assessment. Grantee will submit the Silvicultural Assessment to the CDFW Grant Manager.

Subtask 3.4 - Wildlife Habitat Assessment

Grantee will oversee Subcontractor Project Management and Subcontractor Environmental Planning who will review known information about at-risk species habitat in the project area. Grantee will conduct habitat mapping, wildlife surveys, and habitat assessments to the level necessary, to include State listed species as necessary preparation for CEQA. Grantee will oversee USFS who

will consult with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to produce a Biological Opinion for species with Federal status.

The Grantee will submit to the CDFW Grant Manager Wildlife Habitat Assessment which will include but not limited to the following:

- Summary Survey Report and Geographic information System (GIS)---based maps.
- Analysis of Species of Conservation Concern, which will include habitat evaluation
- A Biological Assessment for species with Federal status, including threatened, endangered, or proposed threatened or endangered
- Biological Opinion

Subtask 3.5 - Recreation Assessment

Grantee will oversee Subcontractor Project Management and Subcontractor Environmental Planning who will use existing GIS and other information to identify recreational facilities and activities within the project area. The Subcontractor Project Management and Subcontractor Environmental Planning will identify facilities and/or activities that have the potential for beneficial or adverse effects from wildfire as well as possible effects to the Project. Grantee will submit to CDFW Grant Manager the Recreation Assessment which will include but not limited to the Recreational Effects Analysis for the Project.

Subtask 3.6 – Hydrology & Soils Assessment

Grantee will identify and map waterways, wetlands, meadows, springs, and other water features using GIS, field verifications, air photos, or other methods as needed. This will include: Delineating waterbody buffer zones using Lahontan Water Board definitions; Planning design features and proposed action mitigations or alternatives based on analysis findings.

Grantee will submit to the CDFW Grant Manager the Hydrology & Soils Assessment which will include but not limited to:

- Delineate riparian conservation areas using GIS (using definitions in the Inyo National Forest land management plan)
- Review water bodies in analysis area to record any special designations (303d list, special status, designated Wild and Scenic Rivers)
- Determine applicable Inyo National Forest land and resource

management plan components and review for compliance and development of project design features

- Complete Cumulative Watershed Effects analysis using the Equivalent Roaded Area method
- Prepare a Watershed Report that analyzes project effects to water quality, water temperature, stream morphology, soil erosion and productivity, incorporating the results of the previous bullets
- Prepare a Timber Waiver application and consult with the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board.

Subtask 3.7 – Environmental Assessment, Conduct NEPA Scoping & Facilitate Decision Process

Grantee will oversee Subcontractor Project Management and Subcontractor Environmental Planning who will complete all necessary actions to produce National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance documents for review and finalization by the United States Forest Service (USFS) Responsible Official. Grantee will oversee the Subcontractor Environmental Planning team whose work will include facilitation of stakeholder group public engagement, scoping, comment period, and tribal consultation. Public and tribal participation for NEPA compliance is the responsibility of USFS Responsible Official. The Subcontractor Project Management and Subcontractor Environmental Planning will work with the USFS to complete a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) document for public comment. USFS Responsible Official will determine if an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required. If a FONSI cannot be completed, and an EIS is required, any necessary additional funding needed will be obtained outside this grant and will be an in-kind match for this grant. Grantee will work with the USFS to finalize all NEPA compliance documents and facilitate the public participation and notification process for the final decision.

The Grantee will submit all draft and final copies of NEPA documents to the CDFW Grant Manager.

Subtask 3.8 - NEPA pre-development Tasks

Grantee will submit to the CDFW Grant Manager a *Resilient Mono Basin* (ESCCRP Part 2) pre-development documents, NEPA Scoping Document, and Draft Proposed Actions, which will include but are not limited to:

Pre Development

- Review of Existing Environmental Documents

- Development of Environmental Planning Roadmap
- Compilation of Draft Partner List, Including Roles and Responsibilities
- Establishment of Project Goals and Objectives
- Draft Project Boundary
- Draft Prioritization Map
- Compilation of Meeting Summaries and Agendas

Scoping Documents

- The INF will complete Draft Proposed Actions, coordinating with the Whitebark Institute, for one or more NEPA Projects in the Mono Basin.

Subtask 3.9 - CalVTP Supplemental Studies for CEQA Compliance

Grantee will submit to the CDFW Grant Manager the Mono Basin ESCCRP Part 2 Draft CEQA documents required by the CalVTP PEIR, which will include but are not limited to:

- Draft CEQA Documents necessary pursuant to the CalVTP for fuels reduction and restoration projects around the communities of Mono City and Lee Vining.
- Draft NEPA Categorical Exclusion documents for Federal partner lands that fall within the State Responsibility Area (SRA) which require both NEPA/CEQA to be positioned for implementation to allow for more rapid response to growing vegetation management concerns.

Task 4 - Prepare Eastern Sierra Climate & Communities Resilience Project (ESCCRP) for Implementation

Grantee will oversee Subcontractor Project Management who will work with Subcontractor Implementation Preparation, who will ensure the ESCCRP is ready for implementation through preparation of CEQA planning needs, monitoring, education and outreach, local workforce development, and develop finance and marketing plan for when NEPA planning is complete.

Subtask 4.1 - Preparations for CEQA Planning Needs

Grantee will identify private lands for inclusion, as well as to prepare Federal lands to be eligible for future State grant funds, Subcontractor Project Management and Subcontractor Environmental Planning will assess additional CEQA planning

needs, review current legislation to identify CEQA planning needs for Federally owned property, prepare a draft budget for CEQA planning needs for ESCCRP, and identify funding opportunity to support CEQA compliance work. The Grantee will submit to CDFW Grant Manager CEQA Lead Agency documentation, maps of non-federal lands to be included in ESCCRP, and a Draft Scope and Budget for CEQA planning.

Subtask 4.2 - Monitoring Plan

Grantee will oversee Subcontractor Project Management who will work with the USFS and the Implementation Preparation, to establish additional baseline monitoring requirements, in addition to the already established monitoring in the USFS Land Management Plan. Grantee will work with partners to maximize the learning opportunity the ESCCRP provides. Grantee will oversee Subcontractor Project Management who will work with USFS to determine how the standard monitoring required covers the project area and develop a Monitoring Plan that will include but is not limited to:

- Identify established protocols and monitoring efforts by partners, adjacent landowners, and collaborating agencies.
- Work with Subcontractor Project Management and Subcontractor Project Implementation and USFS to implement Monitoring Guidance.
- Ensure the monitoring developed is within technical, financial, and staffing capability of the USFS and partners.
- Develop performance measures to be included with Monitoring Plan.

The Subcontractor Project Management will work with the USFS and Subcontractor Implementation Preparation to determine what additional monitoring specific to this project will be required under the terms of the USFS Land Management Plan. The Subcontractor Project Management will work with United States USFS (in-kind) and Subcontractor Implementation Preparation develop monitoring protocols.

Subtask 4.3 - Education & Outreach

Grantee will ensure public outreach regarding recreational facilities and activities within the project area. Public outreach will include local communities and visitors to the project areas. Grantee will oversee Subcontractor Project Management and Subcontractor Implementation Preparation who will work with the Education & Outreach Coordinators (paid through with in-kind) prepare and implement the Ad Hoc team workplan. This coordinator will also

work with Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Planning (RFFC) Program (in-kind) and ESCCRP stakeholders to develop outreach and education strategy for the ESCCRP. Grantee will create printed materials and media content which will include but not limited to:

- Fliers and mailings
- Dedicated project social media and web content
- All content will be translated into Spanish
- The Education and Outreach staff including in the Implementation Team budget will prepare an Outreach and Education workplan during Phase 1 of the project that will be submitted to CDFW

Grantee will oversee Subcontractor Project Management and Subcontractor Environmental Planning who will hold real time group chats adapted for various target audiences and scientific lectures focused on forest restoration aimed at both residents and visitors. Grantee will submit to the CDFW Grant Manager all final copies of Education and Outreach documents.

Subtask 4.4 Local Workforce Development

Grantee will oversee Subcontractor Project Management and Subcontractor Implementation Planning who will meet with local contractors and community leaders to identify business opportunities to meet the pace and scale needs of the ESCCRP. Grantee will develop a Local Workforce Matrix that will but is not limited to:

- Identify State and local assistance programs to aid in business expansion.
- Develop, with Subcontractor USFS long term fuels contracts to incentivize investments by local businesses.
- Work with local tribes to develop workforce programs.
- Identify contractors for implementation work based on the ESCCRP

Grantee will submit to the CDFW Grant Manager a copy of the finalized Local Workforce Matrix.

Subtask 4.5 - Finance & Marketing Plan

Grantee will oversee Subcontractor Project Management and Subcontractor Implementation Preparation who, will develop a Long Term Financial and Marketing Plan for ESCCRP. Subcontractor Project Management and the Subcontractor Implementation will oversee Subcontractor USFS and Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) (in-kind) to expand ecosystem services pilot project to include the Upper Owens River Watershed fuels work

within the ESCCRP. The Subcontractor Project Management and Subcontractor Implementation Prep will work with local water district, fire district and Town Council to identify development of local measures or similar tools which will be used to support fuels management. Grantee will identify funding support ESCCRP long term by working with the Chamber of Commerce to create a program from which local businesses can support implementation of the ESCCRP. In addition, the Subcontractor Project Management, and the Subcontractor Project Implementation will work with Mammoth Mountain Ski Area (in-kind) and Southern California Edison) (in-kind) to identify appropriate investments from those entities based on benefits received. Grantee will submit Long Term financial and Marketing Plan for ESCCRP to CDFW Grant Manager.

5. *Section 6.03.4, Schedule of Due Dates and Deliverables, is replaced in its entirety with the below Section 6.03.4, Schedule of Due Dates and Deliverables. The revised Schedule of Due Dates and Deliverables includes new deliverables for subtask 3.8 and 3.9 and new estimated completion dates consistent with the term extension.*

6.03.4 Schedule of Due Dates and Deliverables:

<u>Task</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Deliverables</u>	<u>Estimated Completion Dates</u>
1	Project Management and Administration	Quarterly Progress Reports	Due within 30 days following each calendar quarter (March, June, September, December) following grant execution.
		Quarterly, Invoices	Due within 30 days following each calendar quarter (March, June, September, December) after grant execution.
		Copies of Executed Subcontracts	With following Quarterly Progress Report upon completion

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<u>Task</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Deliverables</u>	<u>Estimated Completion Dates</u>
		Submit Data Management Plan	2/15/2023
		Submit Project Description Data to EcoAtlas Project Tracker	12/15/2022
		Submit Project Data	2/15/2025
		Project Close-out Summary Report	3/15/2025
		Final Invoice	12/30/2026
2	Interdisciplinary Team (IDT)	IDT Position Descriptions	3/1/2022
		IDT training material	12/30/2022
		IDT Staff CVs	6/15/2022
3	NEPA and Supporting Documents	Copies of Permits	12/30/2024
		Botanical Assessment	12/30/2024
		Archaeological Assessment	12/30/2024
		Silvicultural Assessment	12/30/2024
		Hydrology & Soils Assessment	12/30/2024
		Wildlife Habitat Assessment	12/30/2024
		Recreation Assessment	12/30/2024
		GIS Based Maps	12/30/2024

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<u>Task</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Deliverables</u>	<u>Estimated Completion Dates</u>
		Draft and Final NEPA Documents	3/1/2025
		ESCCRP Part 2_ Pre-Development Documents	6/1/2026
		ESCCRP Part 2 Mono Basin NEPA Scoping Draft Proposed Actions	6/1/2026
		ESCCRP Part 2 Mono Basin CalVTP CEQA Documents and supplemental federal Categorical Exclusions or equivalent.	6/1/2026
4	Prepare Eastern Sierra Climate & Communities Resilience Project (ESCCRP) for Implementation	CEQA Lead Agency documentation	1/15/2024
		Maps of non-federal lands to be included in ESCCRP	1/15/2024
		Draft Scope and Budget for CEQA planning	1/15/2024
		Monitoring Plan	4/15/2023
		Outreach and Education Plan	11/15/2023
		Local Workforce Matrix	12/15/2024
		Long Term financial and Marketing Plan for ESCCRP	12/15/2024

6. Section 9.01, Budget Details and Funding Summary, is replaced in its entirety with the below Section 9.01, Budget Details and Funding Summary. The revised Budget Details and Funding Summary includes line item shifts to move \$205,000 from

Environmental Planning and \$5,000 from Indirect Costs to USFS and \$5,000 from Legal Counsel to Executive Director. In addition, the "Project Management" and "Implementation Planning" subcontractor line items are being combined into a single new "Project Management and Implementation Planning" line item.

SECTION 9 – BUDGET AND PAYMENT

9.01 Budget Details and Funding Summary: Grantor will provide an amount not to exceed \$3,384,269 as detailed in the Line Item Budget Detail (Budget) below. Grantee will provide \$0 in funds or in-kind services as cost share to complete the tasks described in Section 6 – Project Statement. Other funders will provide up to \$2,222,230.in funds or in-kind services as cost share to complete tasks described in Section 6 - Project Statement. Grantee will provide Grantor accurate records of all cost share with the Final Invoice.

Line Item Budget Detail	
A. PERSONNEL SERVICES	
Administrative Assistant	\$48,000
Executive Director	\$74,750
Legal Counsel	\$1,040
Subtotal Personnel Services	\$123,790
Staff Benefits	\$0
Subtotal Personnel Services	\$123,790
B. OPERATING EXPENSES: GENERAL	
Field Supplies	\$0
Travel (Not to exceed State reimbursement rates)	\$0
Subtotal Operating Expenses: General	\$0
C. OPERATING EXPENSES: SUBCONTRACTORS	
Project Management and Implementation Planning	\$475,654
Environmental Planning	\$2,306,375
USFS	\$438,692
Subtotal Operating Expenses: Subcontractors	\$3,220,721
D. OPERATING EXPENSES: EQUIPMENT	
Equipment item	\$0
Subtotal Operating Expenses: Equipment	\$0
E. INDIRECT COSTS	
Indirect Charge Rate 20% (Applies to Sections A + B, and the first \$25K of each subcontractor)	\$39,758
F. GRAND TOTAL (A+B+C+D+E)	\$3,384,269

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All other terms and conditions shall remain the same.

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IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have caused this Agreement to be duly executed as of Grantor date set forth below the signature.

AUTHORIZED AGENT FOR GRANTEE

By:

Signature: _____

Printed Name: Elaine Kabala

Title: Executive Director

Date: _____

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

By:

Signature: _____

Printed Name: Matt Wells

Title: Chief, Watershed Restoration Grants Branch

Date: _____

This agreement is exempt from DGS-OLS approval, per SCM 4.06.



**Eastern Sierra Council of Governments (ESCOG)
Joint Powers Authority Agenda**

STAFF REPORT

To: ESCOG Joint Powers Authority
From: Elaine Kabala, Executive Director
Subject: Discussion and approval of 2025 ESCOG JPA Meeting Schedule
Meeting date: October 23, 2024
Prepared on: October 14, 2024
Attachments: A) None

BACKGROUND/HISTORY:

In 2024, the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments Joint Powers Authority (ESCOG JPA) moved its regular bi-monthly meetings to the fourth Wednesday of each month to accommodate Board schedules and Clerking staff. Meetings were previously scheduled to align with the Eastern Sierra Transit Authority (ESTA) meetings, however ESTA’s adopted 2024 calendar moved to their meetings to the third Thursday of the month at 9:00. ESTA has not proposed dates for 2025 at this time.

Staff is recommending maintaining the Wednesday morning meeting schedule.

The proposed meeting schedule for 2025 is included below.

Wednesday, February 26	8:30 AM	Mammoth Lakes Town Council Chamber
Wednesday, April 23	8:30 AM	Bishop City Council Chamber
Wednesday, June 25	8:30 AM	Mammoth Lakes Town Council Chamber
Wednesday, August 27	8:30 AM	Bishop City Council Chamber
Wednesday, October 22	8:30 AM	Mammoth Lakes Town Council Chamber
Wednesday, December 10	8:30 AM	Bishop City Council Chamber

Staff further requests the Board move the adopted regular meeting scheduled for December 18th to December 4th.

BUDGET IMPACTS:

None.

LEGAL REVIEW:

ESCOG Counsel Grace Chuchla has reviewed this item and found that it complies with the law.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the ESCOG Board discuss the proposed 2025 meeting schedule, make modifications as needed, and approve. Staff further requests the Board move the adopted regular meeting scheduled for December 18th to December 4th.



STAFF REPORT

To: ESCOG Joint Powers Authority
From: Elaine Kabala, ESCOG Staff
Subject: California Jobs First Update
Meeting date: October 23, 2024
Prepared on: October 16, 2024
Attachments: A) Sierra Jobs First Region Request for Proposals
B) Sierra Jobs First Catalyst Project Concepts List

Background:

California Jobs First is a Statewide Investment in job creation, industrial strategy, and economic development initiatives to create a greener and more equitable economy. California Jobs First has two phases: 1) the strategic planning phase was completed August 29, 2024 with the submission of the Sierra Jobs First Regional Plan, and 2) the catalyst phase, which includes the distribution of funding to advance the priorities identified in the strategic planning phase.

The Sierra Business Council (SBC), a Sierra-based nonprofit, was selected as the convener for seven county Sierra region and is tasked with the administration of the catalyst fund process. The Catalyst Fund program is designed to fund pre-development activities that will lead to projects that meet the Sierra Jobs First objectives of equity, sustainability, job quality and access, economic competitiveness, and economic resilience. The Request for Proposals for catalyst funding opened on October 15th and will close on December 15th. Depending on the number of funded projects in the first round closing December 15th, there may be subsequent rounds of funding. All funds must be expended by September 30, 2026.

A total of \$9 million in Catalyst funding is available on a reimbursement basis for exploratory and last mile projects. Project awards will be made subsequent to review by the Project Identification sub-committee and selection by the Governing Council. The funding is designed to maximize benefits across the seven-county region. Awards will range from a minimum of \$25,000 to a maximum of \$1.0 million.

Eligible Activities:

- Awards under the Catalyst Program must advance the priorities identified during the Planning Phase. This includes the priority industry sectors (community health, natural and working lands, sustainable recreation and tourism, clean energy and energy resilience, and sustainable agriculture) and cross cutting initiatives (Small business development, education, workforce development, childcare, housing, and infrastructure).

- Catalyst projects should ensure that workers and disinvested communities are the primary beneficiaries.
- Catalyst projects must be designed to leverage federal, state, and private dollars with evidence of match funding included in the project budget. Catalyst funds are not designed to fully fund any particular project.
- Catalyst applications must quantify the expected number of direct jobs created with planned wage levels, target populations for new jobs, and indirect economic impact in terms of jobs created or retained.
- Applicants must ensure that existing infrastructure can support the proposed project or provide complimentary project information to create the required infrastructure.
- Applicants whose projects directly impact job growth in the region will be responsible for tracking new positions, including but not limited to entering data into CalJobs reporting databases. A team member from the application will be accountable for this, and this must be written into their scope of work.

Ineligible Activities

- Projects may not fund new fossil fuel extraction or activities, or expand fossil fuel production;
- Lobbying or advocacy work to advance legislative policy or the passage of specific bills, or local propositions;
- Payments of existing debt or revolving credit related to proposed project;
- Any expenses NOT directly related to the proposed project including; ongoing operational costs for the applicant, consultant fees unrelated to the project, materials or equipment deemed unnecessary for the project or program, bonus or sales commissions of any kind, purchase of alcohol;
- Administrative costs in excess of 10% of the total costs of the project.

ESCOG staff has been meeting with industry sector partners across the region to identify and understand potential synergistic project opportunities. A list of project concepts that have been discussed is attached. Projects impacting multiple counties will be given funding preference. As such, ESCOG is a logical organization to serve as lead applicant for relevant projects in Eastern Sierra counties.

Staff requests the Board provide direction on ESCOG's role in identifying project opportunities and submitting grants on behalf of regional partners that are consistent with authorities granted by the Sustainable Recreation and Ecosystem Management Program and the Community Economic Resiliency Fund Pilot Program.

BUDGET IMPACTS:

The ESCOG is not currently under contract with Sierra Business Council to convene regional partners and staff time for this work is being funded by the ESCOG general fund balance.

LEGAL REVIEW:

ESCOG Counsel Grace Chuchla has reviewed this item and found that it complies with the law.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff requests the Board provide direction on ESCOG's role in identifying project opportunities and submitting grants on behalf of regional partners that are consistent with authorities granted by the Sustainable Recreation and Ecosystem Management Program and the Community Economic Resiliency Fund Pilot Program, and direct staff to return with any identified grant opportunities at the December ESCOG meeting for approval.

Sierra Jobs First Region Request For Proposals Catalyst Program

Program Background and Objectives

Sierra Business Council, (SBC) is the convener and fiscal agent for the Sierra Jobs First Region of the California Jobs First program which includes the counties of Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, Inyo, Mariposa, Mono, and Tuolumne. The California Jobs First program. The Sierra Jobs First is governed by a Governing Council, a governing body of 25 members, formerly known as the HRTC (High Road Transition Collaborative). The Council and the associated Collaborative represent a broad cross-section of the economy, industries, community benefit organizations (CBOs), and local governments in support of the Sierra Jobs First region’s vision to *“build strong communities, protect healthy ecosystems, and invest in a resilient economy that supports equitable opportunities for generations to come”*

The ultimate goal of the Council and Collaborative is to guide the process for implementing the Regional Strategic Plan that will drive a community-led, climate forward economy. In support of this plan, the Catalyst Fund program is designed to fund pre-development activities that will lead to projects that meet the Sierra Jobs First objectives of equity, sustainability, job quality and access, economic competitiveness, and economic resilience. Catalyst investments will enable the region to develop exploratory projects and to move existing projects in various stages of development toward readiness for implementation funding.

Project applications to the Catalyst Fund must clearly outline the stage of readiness as defined below:¹

- **Exploratory:** Projects in an early stage of development (or program development) that need planning funds to advance the idea to a fundable project or program. This may include funding for research, feasibility studies, capacity assessments, market analysis, or financial plan generation.

¹ **Implementation Funding will be available for “Ready to go” projects** – Projects that have completed all necessary steps for implementation funding including; completed necessary plans or studies such as engineering plans, feasibility studies, comprehensive business plans, any necessary environmental impact reports, etc.

- **Last mile** – Projects that have completed the majority of the planning process and have evidence of feasibility and long-term sustainability. These projects need funding to reach the “ready-to-go” phase. Appropriate use of funds may include business plan development, financial plan with start-up and long-term funding model identified, environmental impact report, engineering plans, community and engagement activities, or other plans necessary to ensure the success of the project.

Sierra Jobs First Guiding Principles

The guiding principles goals based on feedback from the Governing Council and subcommittees are as follows:

- **Equity and Inclusion:** Focus on strategies that build economic prosperity for disinvested communities. Ensure all voices are part of the process.
- **Job Quality and Access:** Focus on identifying and promoting jobs that offer a better quality of life – higher pay, benefits, advancement, worker input, stability, and safety.
- **Sustainability:** Prioritize self-sustaining economic development that aims for a carbon-neutral and climate-resilient economy that benefits all the region’s communities.
- **Pragmatic:** Build actions that are practical, realistic, and achievable.

Funding Availability

A total of \$9 million in Catalyst funding is available on a reimbursement basis for exploratory and last mile projects. Project awards will be made subsequent to review by the Project Identification sub-committee and selection by the Council. The funding is designed to maximize benefits across the seven-county region. Awards will range from a minimum of \$25,000 to a maximum of \$1.0 million.

SBC may provide an Advanced Payment option to community-based non-profit organizations. Advanced Payment options aim to reduce barriers in participating in the Catalyst Program. An amount of up to 10% of grant request may be eligible for an advance, this subject to the availability of funds from the state. For the request to be considered, applicants will need to submit the documents requested for this grant application package. Please see the documentation requirements below in “Required Elements #7.” Applicants are not required to use the Advanced Payment option if the reimbursement model is preferred.

Note – Applicants requesting Advanced Payment will only be eligible for a one-time advance payment and will be required to demonstrate good standing with the IRS. Advanced Payment is subject to approval; the requested percentage at the time of the application is not guarantee.

The applicant is required to follow all requirements of Section 11019.1 of the Government Code and cooperate with any audits by the Department of Finance related to the advanced payments.

Projected Timeline

Date	Milestone	
10/15/2024	Grant Application Portal Opens	
Interim	Technical Assistance provided by Industry Sector Coordinators and SBC staff	
12/15/24	Grant Application Portal Closes for Round 1	
Interim	Applications reviewed and scored	
2/21/2025	Finalists Virtually Pitch Project Ideas to Council	
3/14/2025	Governing Council Votes on Grant Awards	
3/17 - 4/17/2025	Funding Contract Process	
5/15/2025	(TBD) Round 2 Grant Application Opens <i>*Depending on number of projects funded in R1, there may need to be a R2 application process*</i>	
9/30/2026	All Projects Dollars Must be Expended	

Eligibility Requirements

In general, Catalyst Program projects must advance the Regional Strategic Plan and support the overall goal of building a community-led, climate forward inclusive economy. The following is an overview of eligibility requirements:

- **Lead applicant** must have attended at least one Sub-Regional Table meeting or one monthly Stakeholder Meeting between June 2023 and August 2024. Attendance by committed partners that are listed on the application will not be counted.
- **Lead applicant organization** must be **located in and applying for projects** that will take place in at least one of the seven counties of the Sierra Jobs First Region: **Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, Inyo, Mariposa, Mono, and Tuolumne.**
- The State of California mandates that the Catalyst Program adhere to the federal government’s [Justice40 guidelines](#).
- **Projects** must be either **“exploratory”** (an idea or a back-of-the-envelope plan that may need dedicated funding to assess and develop into potential projects) or **“last-mile”** (projects that have undergone initial steps towards development and must clear a few additional hurdles before being considered ready-to-go).
- Applicants must submit **complete budget and timeline information**. Indicate clearly who will receive the funds, including if there will be a need for consultants or an RFP to hire out work.

REQUIRED - State of CA Requirements: Alignment with State requirements of specific climate and social equity goals including:

Equity

Required Criteria	Examples
At least 40% of funds provide direct, meaningful, and assured benefits to disinvested communities	Project benefits communities located within Justice40/ICARP DAC Tool-defined disadvantaged communities
Includes an applicant or co-applicant located in or serving a disinvested community	Project partners with a CBO, tribe, or business serving disinvested communities Project has support from a disinvested community within the project boundary
Align with Executive Order N-16-22 (Racial Equity)	Project can conduct outreach to communities that will benefit/be impacted (translation, outreach partners, meeting people where they are)
Includes equity impact assessment (SBC hopes to have a template with the final RFP)	Project identifies stakeholders and any unintended adverse impact of the project with alternative plans as needed Sample questions: https://www.raceforward.org/sites/default/files/RacialJusticeImpactAssessment_v5.pdf
Includes displacement analysis and avoidance strategy (SBC hopes to have a template with the final RFP)	Project includes methods to avoid community and business displacement due to gentrification, land use planning, lack of transportation, or climate change impacts
Community engagement & feedback mechanisms	Project has a community engagement plan and outlets to communicate project updates and receive feedback

Climate

Required Criteria	Examples
Alignment with CA Air Resources Board (CARB) Scoping plan	Project promotes walkability/bikeability/use of public transit Project decreases energy-related building emissions Project expands/benefits carbon storage in natural and working lands
Alignment with EO N-82-20 (Land and Water protection)	Project aligns with 30x30 goals by protecting biodiversity, natural and working lands
Alignment with EO N-19-19 (ZEV Transition)	Project aligns with ZEV goal of all new passenger vehicle sales being ZEV by 2035, with MD/HD vehicles by 2045

Alignment with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA)	No basins in the region are required to have groundwater protection plans under SGMA, but projects should be aligned with protecting groundwater levels and watersheds
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Job Quality and Access

Required Criteria	Examples
Promotes the creation of family-sustaining jobs	Jobs created by the project include healthcare and retirement benefits, safe working conditions, etc The average job created by the project pays a regional “high wage” defined as \$64,480 in the Regional Summary (pg. 98)
Ensure equitable access to quality jobs for communities throughout the region	The percentage of jobs created that will pay a “high wage” and don’t require a college degree Jobs created provide on-the-job training and pathways to advancement

SUGGESTED - Eligible Activities

- Awards under the Catalyst Program **must advance the priorities identified during the Planning Phase**. This includes the priority industry sectors (community health, natural and working lands, sustainable recreation and tourism, clean energy and energy resilience, and sustainable agriculture) and cross cutting initiatives (Small business development, education, workforce development, childcare, housing, and infrastructure).
- Catalyst projects **should ensure** that workers and disinvested communities are the primary beneficiaries.
- Catalyst projects must be designed to leverage federal, state, and private dollars with evidence of match funding included in the project budget. Catalyst funds are **not** designed to fully fund any particular project.
- Catalyst applications must quantify the expected number of direct jobs created with planned wage levels, **target populations for new jobs**, and indirect economic impact in terms of jobs created or retained.
- Applicants must ensure that **existing infrastructure** can support the proposed project or provide complimentary project information to create the required infrastructure.
- Applicants whose projects directly impact job growth in the region will be responsible for tracking new positions, including but not limited to entering data into CalJobs reporting databases. A team member from the application will be accountable for this, and this must be written into their scope of work.

Ineligible Costs and Activities

- Projects may not fund new fossil fuel extraction or activities, or expand fossil fuel production;
- Lobbying or advocacy work to advance legislative policy or the passage of specific bills, or local propositions;
- Payments of existing debt or revolving credit related to proposed project;
- Any expenses NOT directly related to the proposed project including; ongoing operational costs for the applicant, consultant fees unrelated to the project, materials or equipment deemed unnecessary for the project or program, bonus or sales commissions of any kind, purchase of alcohol;
- Administrative costs in excess of 10% of the total costs of the project.

RFP Application and Selection Process

All applications will be reviewed for completeness by SBC staff before being presented to the PI committee. SBC staff will employ best efforts to ensure all applicants have complete and accurate information to advance in the selection process. All complete project applications will be reviewed by the PI committee and assessed for an initial score based on the project scoring rubric. Once initial scores are assigned, the entire portfolio of applicants will be presented to the Council for review two weeks prior to the October Council meeting for potential awards

Application Requirements and RFP Scoring Criteria

All Catalyst proposals will be evaluated and voted upon by the region's Governing Council. The following criteria include required guidelines from the State of California as well as regional guidelines developed by the Project Identification team and approved by the Council.

Required Elements for RFP Response:

1. Applicant Name and contact
2. Description of applicant's organization, entity type, mission, and role in proposed project
3. Applicant's experience in the region (max 200 words)
4. **Description of proposed project or program seeking funding including:**
 - a. Project Name and overview of project plan, objectives, scope, success metrics, and timeline
 - b. Explain stage of readiness of project (exploratory, last-mile, or ready-to-go)
 - c. Planned beneficiaries of project – include information on geographic location, demographic profile, and how they will benefit
 - d. Funding request amount and project budget including source of match funding (use provided template)
 - e. Priority sector(s) and/or Core Issues impacted by project
5. **Description of proposed projects alignment with CA Jobs First Goals**
 - a. Explanation of how the proposed project will advance the regional strategy and any externalities or risks for implementation. (250 words max)

- b. Explain the economic impact potential for the Sierra JJobs First region (i.e. jobs created or retained, capital attraction, local investment, events, etc). This section may include a detailed analysis and quantifiable data supporting the projected economic benefits of the proposed project (300 words max + exhibits).
- c. Identify the proposed project's impact on sustainability, specifically a carbon-neutral, climate-resilient economy that addresses the needs of the region's communities and the innovation ecosystem. (300 words max)
- d. Explain how this project advances prosperity by creating living wage, benefitted jobs or career pathways or a path to building wealth through entrepreneurship or related activities (300 words max).

6. Project Management and Community Support

- a. Project team – provide information on roles, responsibilities, and prior experience. For partnerships, provide evidence of commitment or MOU explain your long-term strategy for collaboration with local organizations and community stakeholders. Clearly define their scope of work, detailing their respective activities. (max 400 words)
- b. Declaration of ability to meet expenditure deadline of September 2026
- c. Evidence of partnership from a “Disinvested Community”
- d. Letters of support from community leaders

7. Advance Payment (if applicable)

- a. One page statement font) detailing the need for the Advance Payment. The statement must include the type of organization, amount requested, and information on the organizational structure that supports the request.
- b. Up to six month timeline advance payment budget
 - i. Applicants requesting Advanced Payment must submit a projected 6-month timeline for spending the amount advanced. The applicants are strongly encouraged to develop a detailed plan that demonstrates their ability to spend the requested amount. The Timeline must align with all project objectives and demonstrate sound rationale for supporting the project from Advanced Payment to reimbursable.
- c.

Note – If the applicant is not requesting Advance Payment, please select “Not Applicable,” below the Project Name.

Catalyst proposals will be evaluated as follows:

Note for evaluation committee – The criteria will be built out with scoring guidelines once the Project Identification has approved the baseline criteria

	Recommended Regional Criteria	Eligible Scoring Points	Evaluation criteria and indicators
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1	Project demonstrates strong collaborations to maximize impact and the breaking down of silos in region	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of multiple entities focused on a collective goal Project has specific, well supported quantitative and qualitative impact goals (# of people impacted, disinvested communities impacted, etc)
2	Project supports the Regional Strategic Plan vision by advancing at least one of the priority sectors or cross cutting infrastructure needs:	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will this project be a “catalyst” for a larger project or investment (i.e. award would not fund existing operations) Does the project advance multiple sectors and/or core issues
3	Overall feasibility of project – how likely the project is to advance to implementation	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is project budget reasonable and have local match support Is the requested funding sufficient enough to move project towards implementation
4	Project budget and ability to attract additional funding for development and ongoing maintenance	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does project budget narrative consider long- term sustainability of the implementation phase Project has obtained or intends to apply for match funding
5			•
6			
7			
REQUIRED State Criteria			
9	Alignment with state climate goals: Sustainable Groundwater Management Act CA Air Resources Scoping Plan	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the project provide carbon-neutral environmental benefits to the community Does the project increase resilience of communities to climate change impacts
10	Alignment with state equity goals: Racial Equity Executive Order Justice40 guidelines	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the project respond to disinvested communities and their needs? Do disinvested communities have a leadership role in the decision making process and outcomes Beneficiary communities and populations are explicitly named in the proposal.
11	Alignment with Job Quality and Access Criteria	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the project advance livable wage, benefitted jobs, and represent systems change approach to workforce development Does the project remove access barriers for low wage workers or

			marginalized communities (i.e. childcare, transportation, housing)
	Bonus Points		
	Project impacts >40% (up to 20 bonus points) Project directly impacts multiple counties		
	TOTAL POINTS	100+	

Project Budget

Template Provided – See Appendix

Disclaimers

- Submitting a catalyst application does not guarantee funding.
- Conveners do not approve projects.
- Grant amount must be clearly stated and requested by the applicant.
- All proposals will be reviewed and scored by multiple reviewers.
- All grant funding must be expensed by September 30, 2026.
- If you are not awarded in this round you may reapply in the following rounds.

Sierra Jobs First Catalyst Project Concepts List

Inyo County

- Small Business Resource Center Programming Support – fund capacity and programming for Business Resource Center
- Agriculture feasibility study – identify feasibility of local food systems in the Eastern Sierra
 - Focus on grass-fed beef and potential mobile meat processing unit
 - Collaborate with “Sierra Sourced” concept
- Establish Eastern Sierra Community Foundation
- Inyo County for the Arts Support – feasibility study for mobile soundstage
- Municipal Service Reviews of water and wastewater infrastructure in Inyo County communities a comprehensive regional branding and economic collaboration initiative aimed at creating new opportunities for local makers, producers, and trade-based businesses across our region

Alpine County

- Native tree nursery for forest restoration – Develop feasibility analysis for native tree nursery for wildfire recovery
- Establish Highway 395/89 Scenic Byway – Support designation of Highways 395 and 89 as Scenic Byways
- Eastern Sierra Transit Authority (ESTA) route expansion - Feasibility study for ESTA service with a turn-around in Markleeville
- Alpine County Arts and Culture Organization
 - Recently formed
 - Collaborate with other regional arts organizations to support art and culture tourism

Mono County

- Potential Winter recreation project
- Interested in opportunities to collaborate
 - Inyo County/Bishop

Bishop

- Infrastructure Planning – funding for planning for critical infrastructure

Town of Mammoth Lakes

- No update

Sierra Nevada Alliance

- Capacity for recruitment for Columbia College Forestry Programs
- Job Placement for Forestry Jobs

Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions (CHIPS)

- Job training for tribal wildfire resiliency workforce

Motherlode Job Training Center

- Sierra Sourced – Feasibility study for a comprehensive regional branding and economic collaboration initiative aimed at creating new opportunities for local makers, producers, and trade-based businesses across the region (in partnership with Chambers of Commerce regionwide)
- Stipends for daycare training – provide stipends for individuals to become certified as in-home daycare providers
- Youth entrepreneur program – Provide stipends for high school students to receive entrepreneurial training
- Micro-grants for businesses – Provide micro-grants to small businesses
- Meat processing on the westside -Feasibility analysis of USDA meat processing facility for westside counties

Agriculture Industry

- Establishment of food hubs concepts such as gleaning, greenhouses, upskilling landscapers, and agriculture integration into schools

UC ANR

- Community and Economic Development Leadership Academy – funding to establish a regional leadership academy focusing on Community and Economic Development



STAFF REPORT

To: ESCOG Joint Powers Authority
From: Elaine Kabala, ESCOG Staff
Subject: Executive Director Report
Meeting date: August 28, 2024
Prepared on: August 22, 2024
Attachments: A) Eastern Sierra Climate and Communities Resilience Project EA FONSI Decision Notice
B) Safe Sierra Streets: Reclaiming U.S. 395 Main Streets Grant Narrative

Eastern Sierra Pace and Scale Accelerator:

- The Decision Notice for the Eastern Sierra Climate and Communities Resilience Project Environmental Assessment (EA) Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was signed on September 19, 2024. Per the Decision “Implementation can begin following the signing of this decision.” (Attachment A)
- Staff has secured an amendment to the agreement with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to extend the term of the agreement and scope of work to continue work under the grant through December 31, 2026 to expand environmental review to the Mono Basin.
- Staff is working with the Whitebark Institute to leverage funding for environmental review and community scale resiliency projects in the Owens Valley.

Towns-to-Trails:

- MLTPA has provided capacity to groundtruth the entire proposed alignment from Tahoe to Olancho. procured continued consolidating the input received into a final proposed alignment. Based on multiple physical and policy constraints, it is evident there is not an alignment of existing infrastructure that can be implemented as a formalized trail network upon completion of the planning process. Additional agency approvals and potential environmental reviews will be required for full implementation.
- Staff will work with contractors to incorporate the findings to refine the alignment and development an inventory of gaps and appropriate uses.
- Staff has requested an agreement amendment from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy to extend the term of the agreement to April 30, 2025 to allow additional time for development of the storymap and final deliverables.
- Next steps:
 - Alta Planning and Design will prepare a planning document that includes a project description, a proposed alignment, reference to other regional trail planning efforts, and identification of gaps and next steps.

- The planning team will develop an online platform (“storymap”) to improve communication with the public about the project and the proposed alignment.
- Staff will hold final public report-out meeting. This meeting will be held virtually to reach all three counties.

California Jobs First Initiative:

- ESCOG has not received a grant to serve as a contractor to the Sierra Business Council for the Catalyst Phase of California Jobs First, nonetheless, staff has been convening meetings with regional partners to prepare for the application period.
- Staff will be agendaizing a resolution for the Community Economic Resilience Fund Program of work to member agencies

Inyo National Forest Liaison:

- Staff kicked-off work under the Inyo National Forest Liaison grant to build regional relationships and develop a pipeline of project priorities supporting the Sustainable Recreation and Ecosystem Management Program. This work will be curtailed with the departure of administrative support.

ESCOG Administration:

- ESCOG’s administrative support staff has taken another position, and staff is recruiting replacement staff.
- Staff has been participating on the Visit California Regional Advisory Board to inform the Tourism Strategic Plan for the High Sierra region and providing materials as needed.
- A draft RFP for a consultant to prepare a regional housing needs assessment has been prepared and is being circulated by Mono County’s contractors.
- Ongoing grant administration and reporting for the CDFW Proposition 1 grant, Sierra Nevada Conservancy Vibrant Tourism grant, and California Jobs First Initiative.
- Staff submitted a grant application for the Federal Reconnecting Communities Program on September 30, 2024. (Attachment B)
- Staff attended the Calforward Economic Summit in Sacramento.



DECISION NOTICE
EASTERN SIERRA CLIMATE AND COMMUNITIES RESILIENCE PROJECT
U.S. FOREST SERVICE
INYO NATIONAL FOREST
MONO COUNTY, CA

INTRODUCTION

Inyo National Forest (Inyo NF) proposes to implement fuels reduction and forest health treatments in order to reduce the potential of uncharacteristic high-severity wildfire and to improve forest health, resistance, and resilience around the Town of Mammoth Lakes (TOML). The Project area comprises approximately 58,000 acres surrounding TOML considered to be a major economic and recreation hub of the Eastern Sierra. The Project includes ecological thinning, fuels reduction, and restoration using hand, mechanical, and aerial methods in order to restore landscape structure and composition and achieve desired conditions as defined in the 2019 Land Management Plan for the Inyo NF (LMP) (USDA 2019). The proposed treatments are designed to create ecosystems and communities that are able to adapt to future disturbances and climate change.

BACKGROUND

Within much of the Project area, conditions are severely departed from their historical range of conditions, referred to as the *natural range of variation* (NRV). Under the NRV, forests in the Project area had relatively low tree densities, contained more heterogeneous and complex stand structures, and had a greater number of larger, older trees that provided important wildlife habitat structural complexity. Fire occurred more frequently and, in general, burned at a lower severity, sustaining forest health and vigor. Currently, many stands in the Project area have an overabundance of smaller, younger trees and a more simplified, uniform stand structure compared to NRV. As described in Section 1.1 of the Environmental Assessment, these conditions increase tree competition, reduce forest resilience and resistance to current and future expected disturbances, reduce structural complexity and promote high-severity wildfires. In addition, insects, disease, drought, and tree competition have resulted in substantial tree decline and mortality across the Project area, and the extent of dead and dying trees is expected to increase with ongoing climatic warming and drying. Conditions resulting from tree mortality can facilitate high-severity wildfires that exhibit extreme fire behavior and spread rapidly, especially when coupled with common weather patterns on the Sierra east slope (e.g., strong winds).

Without action, stand conditions will continue to deteriorate, tree mortality will continue to spread, and the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire will continue to rise. With current fuel conditions, a wildfire in the Project area could be large and virtually impossible to control (i.e. uncharacteristic of NRV fire regime). This would have severe impacts to lives, property, recreation assets, and critical infrastructure in and around TOML. Nationally, the Forest Service has recognized that current forest conditions represent a 'wildfire crisis' (USDA 2023). In response to this crisis, it is critical for the Forest Service to increase the pace and scale of fuels and forest health treatments to reduce



the risk of uncharacteristic high-severity wildfire for forests surrounding TOML.

DECISION

Based upon my review of the Eastern Sierra Climate and Communities Resilience Project Environmental Assessment (EA) Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), public comments, and Project record, I have decided to authorize all activities included in the Proposed Action in the 'Initial Decision Area' (see included map), within approximately 43,700 acres of the Project Area. This portion of the Project area has adequate cultural surveys (see rationale below). This decision does not approve the Proposed Action for the entire Project area. All design criteria described in the EA Appendix B as well as the implementation process described in Appendix E are incorporated into this decision and will be implemented in the Project.

I agree with the finding that this Proposed Action will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. The decision notice and supporting documents, including the EA and FONSI, are available on the Project webpage at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=61827>.

Relationship of this Decision to Subsequent Decisions

This decision is the first in a staged decision-making approach for this Project. The Proposed Action is analyzed in one environmental analysis document (i.e., the EA); however, subsequent decisions would be required to approve activities outside the 'Initial Decision Area' in other portions of the Project area. I have chosen this approach because it allows for immediate treatment in the highest priority portions of the Project area (i.e. Tier 1), while meeting my commitment to tribes that cultural surveys and NHPA consultation will be completed before each decision. For each subsequent decision, the Forest Service will follow appropriate environmental analysis and decision-making procedures, including public involvement.

DECISION RATIONALE

Stand conditions are deteriorating rapidly within the Project area which is evident by expanding tree mortality and high levels of fuels loads which increase the risk of an uncharacteristic wildfire each year (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Existing Conditions at the Inyo Craters

TOML and surrounding area face a high probability that uncharacteristic wildfire could severely impact our community, infrastructure, recreation assets and ecosystem function. I am convinced that every year we do not take action to reduce fuel loads and restore forests toward NRV, the risk of losing these assets increases greatly. Throughout the planning process, I have heard from many local stakeholders who expressed an urgent need to increase the pace and scale of treatments to reduce wildfire risk. I believe that the decision to implement the Proposed Action is essential to addressing community protection as well as moving our forests towards desired conditions outlined in the LMP.

I have heard concerns about the scale and site-specificity of this Project as well as our ability to adequately identify and protect sensitive resources post-decision. Due to the wildfire crisis, there is a need for a much larger scale of treatments than has previously been conducted on Inyo NF. This need is both codified in our 2019 LMP and was expressed in multiple public comments. In some cases, it is neither efficient nor feasible to conduct all resource surveys in advance of environmental analysis for a landscape-level project. This would severely restrict our ability to implement large-scale restoration in the urgent timeframe desired by our stakeholders. Concurrently, due to the increasingly dynamic nature of forest health, we also need to be flexible and agile to respond to new mortality events as they arise. Conducting all resource surveys and treatment planning pre-decision can result in surveys or treatment that do not reflect conditions at time of implementation. As described in the Project implementation plan (EA Appendix E), we would field verify stand conditions, proposed treatments and resource survey needs prior to implementation. The robust suite of 80+ design criteria are included to identify and protect sensitive resources (Appendix A). The post-decision implementation plan also ensures that FS staff review treatments and apply site-specific design criteria to ensure that effects to sensitive resources are within the scope of the EA (i.e. no significant effects). If the agency's review indicates that a proposed treatment would substantially depart from this decision or result in significant effects not analyzed in the EA, the treatment would either be modified or supported by additional NEPA analysis.



How the Proposed Action Meets the Purpose and Need

The purpose of this Project is: 1) to improve community wildfire resilience; 2) to improve ecosystem health; and 3) to prepare the landscape for the reintroduction of beneficial fire. Fuels treatments are essential to reduce the accumulation of fuels that has occurred across the landscape, to improve the safety of communities, and allow for a greater opportunity for fire personnel to safely and effectively respond to a fire. Ecological thinning is necessary to restore forests and ecosystems in the Project area to desired conditions as identified in the LMP and to intercept increasing competition-induced tree mortality, spreading insect related tree mortality, and overall ecosystem degradation. To address this issue, there is a need to be able to adapt treatments to ensure the Project considers restoration holistically across the landscape while also ensuring that effective and timely treatments are applied on the ground. Additionally, fuels reduction and ecological thinning treatments are necessary to create conditions for the eventual reintroduction of fire which would further improve ecosystem health and function, and resistance and resilience to disturbances. The Proposed Action includes actions and design criteria which address each of these needs.

When reviewing the EA and FONSI, I considered the potential of not approving treatments (No Action Alternative). The analysis demonstrates that current conditions throughout much of the Project are conducive to extensive, uncharacteristic, high-severity wildfire. If I selected the No Action Alternative, wildfires occurring under moderate to high fire danger conditions would likely exhibit very high to extreme fire behavior, which could have long-term impacts to our community, infrastructure, recreation assets and ecosystem function. Comparatively, under the Proposed Action, there would be a reduction of both live and dead surface and aerial fuel loading which is predicted to reduce fire behavior (i.e. flame lengths, rates of spread, scorch heights) (see EA Section 3.1). Furthermore, the analysis demonstrates that, without treatment, forest stand conditions would continue to degrade. Tree densities would continue to be high, resulting in a high potential for competition-induced mortality and a likely reduction in the resilience of stands to climate change, drought, and insect infestation (see EA Section 3.2). Additionally, the analysis demonstrates that, without treatment, the ability to implement prescribed and managed fire as desired in our LMP strategic fire management zones would be severely restricted, and in many areas, potentially infeasible.

How the Proposed Action Considered Public Comments

I appreciate the public feedback I received during the comment period. I have carefully considered these comments, and our interdisciplinary team made modifications to the Final EA and FONSI as well as the Draft Decision Notice and other documents to address public comments as well as comments made during tribal consultation. We added more site-specific maps, added and adjusted design features, updated supporting analysis in the EA, updated the Implementation Plan and eliminated the Heritage Implementation Plan (HIP). Some comment topics are discussed below; further detail on how all comments were considered and addressed is included in EA Appendix H. I believe the Proposed Action is responsive to public concerns while also still meeting the purpose and need.



I have heard concerns from our local Tribes as well as other stakeholders about conducting cultural resource surveys and National Heritage Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 consultation after a signed decision. As a result, I have committed to signing multiple decisions for the Project area. My first decision is limited to those areas that have been previously adequately surveyed for cultural resources (approximately 43,700 acres), so that NHPA Section 106 consultation can be undertaken using the Region 5 Section 106 National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Programmatic Agreement (R5PA), as was requested by Tribes. Additional cultural resource surveys, tribal consultation and public involvement will be completed prior to my authorization of actions in additional portions of the Project area via subsequent decision notices; however, the environmental effects disclosed in the Final EA are not anticipated to change and should be sufficient to inform subsequent decisions.

Some commenters expressed concern that treatments proposed in Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRA) are not consistent with the Roadless Rule and that the EA does not explain why it is necessary to remove trees up to 24 inches. I believe the Draft EA provided sufficient rationale for how the treatments are consistent with the Roadless Rule, which is supported by our Regional Forester's administrative review in November 2023. The IRA effects analysis was modified in both the IRA Specialist Report and EA Section 3.9 to provide greater detail on the relationship of diameter to desired stand conditions, in terms of both wildfire risk and ecosystem composition/structure objectives. We chose to use growth potential and NRV diameter distribution as indicators of what constitutes a characteristically "small" or "large" diameter tree, rather than current average diameter because historic disturbance (e.g. logging or lack of fire) has led to a greater density of smaller trees, skewing current diameter distributions. Across the IRA, when compared to NRV, there is an excess of trees (per acre) <24 inches. The vast majority of trees proposed for removal in IRA are actually <10 inches dbh (81%). However, there is also an excess of trees (per acre) in the 10–24-inch size class. The limited amount of thinning proposed within the 10–24-inch dbh size class is generally targeted at declining/unhealthy trees or those impacted by pests or pathogens, with the intent of protecting healthy larger and older trees as well as more fire- and drought-tolerant species. Thinning trees in the 10–24-inch size class is necessary to reduce the risk of crown fire by creating a discontinuous canopy. It also reduces mortality potential for larger, older trees from competition, insects, and diseases and has the additional benefit of increasing stand heterogeneity and wildlife habitat mosaic complexity. Overall, I believe that the effects analysis strongly supports the need to remove trees up to 24 inches "to maintain or restore the characteristics of ecosystem composition and structure" within IRA.

Some commenters expressed concern that the Project would not adequately protect core marten habitat and could have negative effects on marten habitat and movement. We added additional analysis to EA Section 3.5 EA to address marten habitat and connectivity. A tradeoff exists between the loss of habitat value that occurs when forests are thinned to reduce the severity of future fires and the loss of habitat that occurs when untreated stands are consumed by wildfire. Treatments to reduce fire severity can be beneficial if they do not reduce the density of important habitat elements, such as the largest size classes of trees, snags, and logs as this Project aims to do (North et al. 2009). The measures outlined in the Project to retain the density of snags, logs, and the largest size classes of trees are expected to yield long-term benefits for marten habitat. The retention of snags, large logs, and mature trees maintains structural complexity within the habitat and contributes to a more resilient habitat. By strategically preserving these important habitat elements, I aim to reduce the



risk of uncharacteristic and habitat-destroying wildfires.

During both scoping and the comment period for the Draft EA, I heard concerns that mowing treatment could affect Bi-State sage grouse (BSSG). In response, we refined the Proposed Action to clarify where mowing could occur and modified the analysis. I am only authorizing mowing in highly selective and strategic areas where the goal is either to protect lives, infrastructure, or BSSG habitat. These areas are limited to 50 feet along certain roads or up to 300 feet around other infrastructure. The analysis supports that mowing will strategically mitigate wildfire risk and allow for safer conditions for firefighters and that the targeted areas are lower quality BSSG habitat due to their proximity to human activity. In addition, we added and modified design criteria to reduce the potential for impacts of this treatment type on BSSG and their habitat, including extending the limited operating period (LOP) within high and moderately suitable sage-grouse habitat from March 1 to August 15. Further details can be found in EA Section 3.5 and in the Biological Assessment.

As summarized in the EA, there is potential for the Proposed Action to have some adverse—albeit short-term and not significant—impacts to wildlife, vegetation, air quality, soils, water quality, and recreation and scenery. However, the importance of implementing these treatments to reduce the risk of wildfire to communities and critical infrastructure, cultural resources and natural resources cannot be overstated. There is a clear and demonstrated need to reduce the risk of wildfire to communities and ecosystems, to reduce the potential for extreme fire behavior and to improve and restore forest health. For these reasons, within the Initial Decision Area, I am choosing to implement the Proposed Action and associated design features, while also recognizing the potential for some adverse impacts to resources.

Other Alternatives Considered

In addition to the Proposed Action, I considered several other alternatives the public recommended during scoping and the comment period, including no action, reduced scale (i.e. treating only Tier 1, approximately 11,700 acres around the town of Mammoth Lakes and not treating IRA) and reduced scope (further limitations on thinning in IRA). None of these alternatives would meet all aspects of the purpose and need for the Project, so they were not analyzed in detail. Rationale provided in EA Section 2.3.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A list of agencies, organizations, and individuals consulted regarding this proposal is included in the Project record and public involvement information summarized in EA Sections 1.5 and 1.6.

A scoping letter announcing the proposed Project was sent on October 17, 2022, via email or postal mail to over 140 people, agencies, and organizations. We received a total of 13 individual scoping letters which were used to modify or clarify the Proposed Action, consider alternatives to the Proposed Action, and focus the environmental analysis. A legal notice announcing the 30-day comment period on the Draft Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact was published on November 16, 2023. We received 17 comment letters. The summary of comments received during the 30-day comment period and how they were considered is found in the EA Appendix.



FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

My decision complies with all applicable law, regulation, and policy as documented in the FONSI as well as EA Section 4. The Proposed Action was developed in accordance with and does not threaten to violate any Federal, State or local laws or requirements for protecting the environment (i.e., Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, National Environmental Policy Act, National Forest Management Act, National Historic Preservation Act). The activities under the Proposed Action were also reviewed and found to be consistent with the Inyo National Forest Land Management Plan.

In considering both the EA and the FONSI, I have determined that the Proposed Action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will not be prepared.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (APPEAL) OPPORTUNITIES

The proposed decision was subject to pre-decisional administrative review (aka objection process) pursuant to 36 CFR 218, Subparts A and B. A legal notice announcing the 45-day objection period was published in the *Inyo Register*, the newspaper of record, on May 15, 2024. Notice of the availability of the draft decision and Environmental Assessment was sent to the project mailing list, including those who submitted project-specific written comments during scoping or the 30-day public comment period of the Draft Environmental Assessment. Upon the objection period's completion on July 15, 2024, I received three objections. However, none of the objectors were eligible to object therefore they were not formally considered.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Implementation can begin following the signing of this decision. For other further information concerning the Eastern Sierra Climate and Communities Resilience Project, contact Elisabeth McElwee, Elisabeth.mcelwee@usda.gov, (304) 546-0026, Mammoth Lakes Ranger District; 2510 Main St., Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546


LESLEY YEN
Forest Supervisor

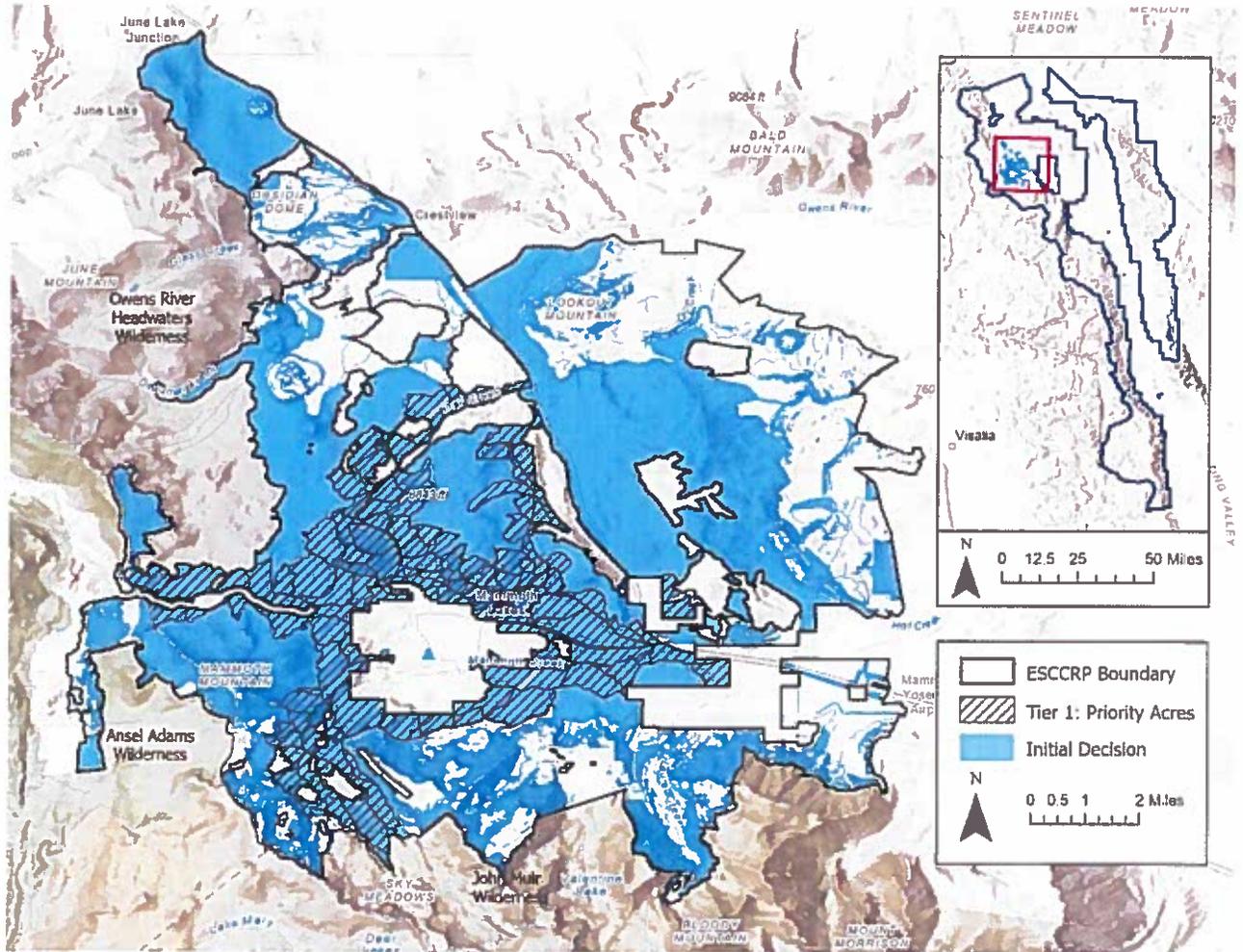
19 Sept 2024
Date

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MAP



REFERENCES

North, Malcolm P., Kip M. Van de Water, Scott L. Stephens, and Brandon M. Collins. 2009. Climate, rain shadow, and human-use influences on fire regimes in the eastern Sierra Nevada, California, USA. *Fire Ecology* 5, no. 3: 20-34.

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SAFE SIERRA STREETS: RECLAIMING HIGHWAY 395 MAIN STREETS



Leveraging regional partnerships to plan for safer, better connected, thriving communities in California’s beautiful Eastern Sierra.

Attachment B

Applicant Name: Eastern Sierra Council of Governments

Type of Applicant: Local Government, Joint Powers Authority

Grant: Planning Grant

Grant Request: \$1,721,635

Match: \$405,405

Project Contact: Elaine Kabala, ESCOG Executive Director

Email: ekabala@escog.ca.gov

Project Location (11-digit Census Tract identifier): 06051000102 ; 06027000100;
06027000400; 06027000500; 06027000800

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1. Overview

Introduction to the Project

The Eastern Sierra Council of Governments (ESCOG) is spearheading an initiative to convert U.S. Highway 395 from a high-speed route into vibrant, community-centered main streets that better serve residents and businesses. For decades, US 395 has been pivotal for transporting goods and tourists through Mono and Inyo Counties, but its design has favored speed over community needs, endangering pedestrian safety and livability.

This project covers 15 miles of Main Streets across 15 communities, including five tribal nations, along a 280-mile stretch of US 395. (Attachments A-C) These towns are gateways to destinations like Yosemite and Death Valley National Parks, Mono Lake, and Mammoth Mountain Ski Resort, which attract roughly 2.8 million visitors yearly. However, extensive highway expansions have turned these streets into high-speed corridors that divide communities and make it difficult for residents to walk, bike, or access daily destinations.

In Mono and Inyo Counties, public land dominates—about 98% in Inyo and 94% in Mono—leaving very little private land available for housing and community development (Attachment H). This scarcity of privately owned land has limited opportunities for new housing and economic development. It constrains the local tax base and discretionary funding for community development improvements. The urgent need to reclaim our main streets as safe, vibrant spaces coincides with residents' desires for a better balance between the highway's regional role and local quality of life.

ESCOG, a Joint Powers Authority, coordinates regional planning and economic development in the Eastern Sierra. It collaborates with local, state, and federal partners to foster community development, economic diversity, sustainable recreation, and climate resilience. ESCOG and its partners are committed to equitable project execution to enhance safety, health, and connectivity in the Eastern Sierra.

History and Character of the Eastern Sierra

The focus of this grant is the fifteen traditional small towns and Tribal communities along US 395 in Mono and Inyo Counties, where the highway serves as the primary Main Street. These counties lie on the eastern side of the Sierra Nevada and are linked to California mainly through Highway 395, as there are no year-round Sierra Nevada passes. Populations in these communities range from 150 to 4,000 residents, with Highway 395 cutting through each town to support high-speed freight traffic, creating unsafe and unwelcoming downtown areas. This has led to divided neighborhoods, limited economic activity, and barriers to necessary housing development. California Department of Transportation (Caltrans District 09) has jurisdiction over the Main Streets of all these communities for the entire right-of-way, including sidewalks, while federal and public land managers control the surrounding areas, preventing further private development. The result is that the communities themselves have limited autonomy over their future and the character of their communities, and the prosperity of each community is dependent on downtown revitalization, infill housing, and redevelopment. (Attachment H)

Historical Harm

In the 1950s, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) began a multi-decade project to expand Highway 395 from two lanes to four (Attachment I). The primary goals were to increase freight capacity and improve safety on the highway, but the consequences for the small communities along the highway have been profound and long-lasting.

As a result of this expansion, Highway 395 is now an uninterrupted expressway with long, 65 mph segments between communities. The transition from high-speed highway travel to these small communities is abrupt. There are no traffic-calming measures to alert drivers they are entering these populated areas, often resulting in vehicles maintaining high speeds and endangering residents. Instead of town centers and Main Streets, residents and visitors face the dangers of a freight-dominated downtown, making it an unwelcoming and unsafe space, particularly for families and children. This can be particularly dangerous at night, as there is little or no pedestrian lighting. This issue is especially acute in Tribal communities at the town edges, where the highway first enters. (Attachment J)

Caltrans' ownership of the entire highway right-of-way prevents local communities from implementing their own improvements, hindering pedestrian-friendly developments and impacting local businesses that depend on foot traffic. The lack of safe, walkable environments has led to pedestrian fatalities, including children walking to school, and discourages investments in crucial infill housing. This situation underscores the urgent need for traffic calming and safety measures in these community centers.

Local officials, residents, and business owners have identified the need to improve the downtown areas of small towns along Highway 395 as a critical issue. The ESCOG has produced a video, "[Reclaiming Highway 395 Stories](#)" (Attachment C), which highlights the impacts and includes community testimonials. Public meetings have echoed the frustration and urgency due to the current conditions that diminish livability, safety, and economic potential.

Additionally, communities along US 395 in Mono and Inyo Counties have faced over a century of marginalization, leading to social, economic, and cultural degradation, including displacement, environmental exploitation, and cultural suppression, particularly affecting Indigenous populations.

1. **Displacement of Indigenous Communities:** For thousands of years, Indigenous tribes, including the Paiute, Shoshone, and Mono Lake Kootzaduka'a, lived in the Eastern Sierra, stewarding the land and maintaining complex social and cultural systems. However, the arrival of settlers in the 19th century brought violence, displacement, and loss of land. Tribes were relocated from their traditional homelands to small reservations adjacent to townsites.
2. **Water Diversions and the Owens Valley Water Wars:** One of the most significant historical harms to the region was water diversion from the Owens Valley to Los Angeles in the early 20th century. The Los Angeles Aqueduct, completed in 1913, drained the Owens River and dried up Owens Lake, leading to ecological devastation and economic decline. Local farmers, ranchers, and Indigenous communities were left without the vital water resources they depended on for agriculture and daily life. This environmental harm was compounded by dust storms from the dry lakebed, creating public health issues that continue to affect the area. To preserve their water rights, the City of Los Angeles took

ownership of nearly all private land in the Owens Valley. These lands are still owned by the City of Los Angeles and preserved for water rights over 100 years later, crippling opportunities for housing and economic development.

3. **Economic Struggles and Dependence on Tourism:** Many communities nurtured outdoor recreation as a primary economic driver due to the loss of water and agricultural viability. While tourism brought some economic relief, it also made the towns highly dependent on seasonal and unpredictable visitor flows. This reliance on tourism has left many communities vulnerable to economic downturns, environmental changes, and shifts in visitor patterns, with little opportunity to diversify their economies.

In short, Eastern Sierra communities have limited control over their development, with key decisions often made by external government entities. This history has left a legacy of displacement, environmental injustice, and economic difficulties. Transforming US 395 into vibrant main streets offers a chance to heal these historical wounds. This initiative aims to prioritize community needs, celebrate local culture, and promote sustainable and resilient economies that respect the region's rich heritage and diversity.

Transportation Needs and Project History

Historically, US 395 was designed to expedite vehicle movement, aiding tourists and freight but detrimentally affecting community livability. Its vehicle-centric design has escalated noise, air pollution, and hazards for pedestrians and cyclists. Decades of widening have transformed potential vibrant community hubs into traffic-heavy roads that split neighborhoods and hinder access to services and local economies. Despite extensive advocacy by residents, local governments, and tribal communities for pedestrian-friendly improvements and numerous planning efforts like the *Eastern Sierra Corridor Enhancement Plan*, the highway still fails to adequately meet community needs.

See our review of 22 US 395 Corridor and Main Street Plans that call for Complete Street features additions - Attachment L.

Barriers Created by the Existing Facility and Proposed Planning Activities

The current configuration of US 395 poses several barriers to community connectivity, safety, and economic vitality:

- **Community Division and Limited Livability:** The highway divides towns and neighborhoods with its high-speed, four-lane layout, prioritizing vehicles over pedestrians. This hinders access to schools, businesses, and community spaces. This design diminishes the sense of community and turns main streets into busy, unsafe corridors.
- **Unsafe Conditions for Pedestrians and Cyclists:** US 395 lacks facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, resulting in dangerous conditions at school crossings and major intersections. Its wide lanes and high speeds lead to frequent collisions, creating unsafe conditions for non-motorized users and discouraging walking or biking. The highway features limited sidewalks, no dedicated bike lanes, no streetscaping, and lacks traffic calming measures at community entrances, failing to signal the transition from the expressway. Additionally, half of the communities in this project need stop lights or stop signs along their Main Streets.
- **Economic and Environmental Impacts:** Noise and air pollution from heavy traffic along US 395 make nearby properties less appealing for residential and commercial development. Additionally, the limited private land in our counties restricts new housing and business

opportunities. This scarcity of developable land increases costs and hinders local growth and economic resilience.

ESCOG and Caltrans District 09 Partnership for US 395 Main Street Vision

ESCOG was initially excited to partner with Caltrans District 09, which had secured funding to develop a Project Study Report (PSR) for transforming US 395 into a community-focused main street. However, due to budget constraints, District 09 can no longer fund the PSR, posing a significant challenge. Despite this setback, the continued support from the community and District 09 strengthens our commitment to this vision. Local partnerships with Caltrans to develop PSRs had been effective for implementing the community's vision for previous projects in Lee Vining and Bridgeport, and we hope to expand this successful model for the region.

Despite the recent loss of funding for the PSR, the strong support from our communities and District 09 has reinforced our commitment to the US 395 Main Street vision. ESCOG is now seeking funding to lead the development of the PSR. This initiative will focus on comprehensive community engagement and forming citizen advisory committees to ensure public participation is at the project's core. We aim to establish a transparent and inclusive process that prioritizes local needs and addresses concerns of disadvantaged communities, advancing our partnership with Caltrans to create safe and vibrant communities.

Proposed Planning Activities

ESCOG proposes a comprehensive set of planning activities aimed at reclaiming US 395 as a community asset and addressing the barriers created by its current design:

- 1. Traffic Calming and Safety Enhancements:** The project will implement traffic calming measures such as curb extensions, raised crosswalks, and refuge islands to reduce vehicle speeds and enhance safety for all users. These modifications will make our main streets safer and more accessible for pedestrians and cyclists. Additionally, the project will create consistent, locally tailored gateway treatments to inform motorists they are entering a community and highlight the unique character of the Eastern Sierra.
- 2. Multimodal Streetscape Improvements:** Expanding sidewalks, adding bike lanes, and enhancing transit stops are key to transforming US 395 into vibrant, multimodal streetscapes. These improvements will convert the high-speed highway into welcoming community spaces encouraging people to linger, shop, and connect.
- 3. Community-Driven Design and Place-making:** Working with local stakeholders, including tribal communities, ESCOG aims to ensure US 395's redesign honors each town's unique character and history. Place-making elements like public art, street trees, and enhanced lighting will foster community pride and ownership. ESCOG collaborates with the Inyo County Council for the Arts, Mono Arts Council, and C5 Community Arts Center to involve artists and cultural leaders, ensuring the project authentically reflects each community's identity.
- 4. Environmental Resilience and Sustainability:** The project will incorporate sustainable features like shade trees, rain gardens, and bioswales to improve environmental quality, manage stormwater, and enhance climate resilience. These efforts aim to create healthier, more livable communities along US 395.
- 5. Supporting Local Businesses and Mixed-Use Development:** The project aims to boost local business growth and encourage mixed-use development by improving access and

creating attractive spaces. This strategy will address housing and economic challenges due to limited private land availability, promoting a more connected and resilient community.

- 6. Comprehensive Solutions for Connected Communities:** The funding application will support feasibility studies, including updating the *2007 Bishop Area Access and Circulation Study*. This update will gauge community and business support for solutions to manage truck traffic in Bishop, exploring alternative routes, streetscaping, and multi-modal transportation options to ease Main Street congestion. This study is crucial for advancing the *2022 Downtown Bishop Specific Plan and Mixed-Use Overlay*.

Primary Project Locations and Map

(Note: all plans cited are discussed in Attachment L)

- **Coleville (pop. 353):** Located in Antelope Valley, a Mono County unincorporated community by the Nevada border, it houses about 70 Marine Corps families whose children attend school along Highway 395. Centrally located, Coleville provides all government services (post office, library, schools) for the area. The highway lacks sidewalks, stoplights, or calming features. With no prior visioning or planning to address these issues, Mono County seeks funding to develop a unified community vision for a safer downtown, including traffic calming, streetscaping, medians, trails or bike lanes, and gateway elements.
- **Walker (pop. 401):** Walker is an unincorporated community in Antelope Valley known for its access to the West Walker River, popular among anglers. It is the largest community and the commercial center of the area, hosting essential services like general stores, a gas station, restaurants, several hotels, and satellite County offices on 395. The highway is consistently three lanes wide. Residents have documented concerns about speeding, with drivers often passing illegally in the center turn lane. HM4 Safety grant funds have been awarded for minor traffic calming work, which may include painted bike lanes and possibly crosswalks. Mono County is seeking additional funding to develop a vision for a safer downtown, including traffic calming treatments, streetscaping, medians, an off-highway trail or bike lane, and gateway features.
- **Bridgeport (pop. 509):** The county seat of Mono County, Bridgeport is a historic town known for its Victorian courthouse, hot springs, fishing, and outdoor activities. It's an unincorporated community starting 1000 feet east of Emigrant Street and ending 6/10 miles later at US 395 and CA 182. The 2013 Main Street Revitalization Plan for U.S. 395 through Bridgeport helped reduce Highway 395 from five to three lanes and added Class II bike lanes to lower speeds. The Caltrans "Bridgeport Rehab" project will add new sidewalks and bulbouts with high-visibility crosswalks. Mono County seeks funding to enhance the streetscape with new and wider sidewalks, more trees, crosswalks, and gateway features.
- **Bridgeport Indian Colony (pop. 120):** Located $\frac{2}{3}$ mile north of Bridgeport, this small Native American community focuses on preserving its cultural heritage and traditions while providing services to residents. Despite being integral to the greater Bridgeport area, plans for a pathway enabling tribal residents to walk and bike to Bridgeport have been delayed or cut due to Caltrans' staffing and funding limitations. The colony seeks funding to develop a community vision for safe infrastructure to better connect with Bridgeport services.

Attachment B

- **Lee Vining (pop. 590):** As the eastern gateway to Yosemite National Park via Tioga Pass, Lee Vining offers stunning views and outdoor activities centered around the Mono Basin Scenic Area Visitor Center. In 2025, Caltrans will begin implementing the 2018 Lee Vining Main Street Rehabilitation vision, which will reduce roads from five to three lanes, add Class II Bike Lanes, back-in parking, wider sidewalks, bump-outs, and beacon crosswalks. Mono County is seeking funding to enhance community visioning and develop gateway features that manage traffic flow as it enters the town, which stretches from Visitor Center Drive south to CA 120.
- **Bishop Paiute Tribe (pop. 1,651):** As the largest tribe in the Eastern Sierra and fifth largest in California, the Bishop Paiute Tribe's reservation borders Highway 395. Residents frequently walk or bike along the highway to access services in nearby Bishop. The tribe has developed economic ventures along the highway, including a casino, gas station, and a new hotel. They are seeking funding to enhance pedestrian safety, streetscaping, and gateway features, along with other traffic calming measures for both the reservation members and other pedestrians near Bishop.
- **Bishop (incorporated pop. 3,789, the sphere of influence pop. 11,275):** As the commercial and government hub of Inyo and Mono Counties, Bishop confronts challenges with its US 395 Main Street in implementing Complete Street solutions while managing 15,300 vehicles daily. It's also the terminus of US 6, a critical freight link between the Port of Los Angeles and distribution centers in Reno, NV. The *2022 Downtown Bishop Specific Plan and Mixed-Use Overlay* promotes a vibrant downtown with multi-modal transportation but requires traffic reductions for multi-modal improvements. If this grant is awarded, the city will update the *2007 Bishop Area Access and Circulation Study* to consider route alternatives to reduce truck traffic primarily accessing Highway 6 via Highway 395, increase multimodal options, and develop traffic calming designs like bulbouts, medians, streetscaping, and gateway features to enhance safety and reduce speeds.
- **Big Pine (pop. 1,570):** An unincorporated town, Big Pine is the gateway to the Palisade Glacier and the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest. Lacking comprehensive visioning, traffic calming measures, or stop signs/lights, both elementary and high schools are separated from most residences by Highway 395. The Big Pine Civic Club is an ardent supporter of this visioning work but cannot initiate or administer a planning project. Inyo County is seeking funding to engage the community in developing a vision for Main Street that enhances pedestrian safety, introduces traffic calming, and adds gateway features to delineate the community's Main Street.
- **Big Pine Paiute Tribe (pop. 500):** The Big Pine Paiute Reservation is situated at the southern edge of Big Pine and serves as the initial entry point for motorists from the south. As drivers transition from highway to main street speeds upon entering the reservation, the community contends with high-speed traffic moving through the community. Residents rely on neighboring Big Pine for services like groceries and schools but lack pedestrian safety and traffic calming features. The highway divides their community, restricting connectivity and economic growth. The tribe seeks funding to develop a comprehensive community vision, incorporating pedestrian, multi-modal transportation solutions and traffic calming measures, including gateway features to signal the transition into a community.



- **Fort Independence Paiute Reservation (pop. 148):** Located two miles north of Independence, Fort Independence is the only community in the project scope with a divided expressway cutting it in half and not contiguous to a corresponding town. The tribe has received funding to develop a long-range transportation plan, focusing on a grade-separated crossing of 395 and a non-motorized connection to Independence. They seek additional funding to unify their community planning efforts and enhance traffic calming at their gateways.
- **Independence (pop. 761):** Independence is the unincorporated county seat of Inyo County, often described as a preserved pioneer community. Main Street/Highway 395 spans four lanes without medians or traffic calming measures, leading to pedestrian fatalities due to high-speed traffic through the less than a mile-long town. Comprehensive community engagement and visioning for Main Street have been lacking. Inyo County is seeking funding to engage the community in developing a vision for downtown improvements, including complete streets and gateway features to slow traffic.

Attachment B

- **Lone Pine (pop. 1,580):** Famous for its proximity to Mount Whitney, the highest peak in the contiguous United States, Lone Pine is the southern gateway to the Eastern Sierra. It is unincorporated and lacks formal community visioning for Main Street, which could use gateway features to signal entry into the community. Lone Pine High School, located on Highway 395 at the town's south end, and students have been hit crossing Main Street. Inyo County seeks funding to develop a comprehensive vision for pedestrian safety, traffic calming enhancements, and gateway features.
- **Lone Pine Paiute-Shoshone Reservation (pop. 350):** Located at the southern end of Lone Pine, this community is the first Main Street community motorists encounter after 115 miles of traveling at expressway speeds. The reservation is bisected by Highway 395 and lacks traffic calming and pedestrian infrastructure like other Eastern Sierra reservations. As a small sovereign community, the Lone Pine Paiute Shoshone faces challenges in planning and implementing mitigations. If this grant is awarded, they plan to develop a vision for connectivity, including complete street improvements and gateway features.

Source: Attachments D, E

2. Response to Merit Criteria

Community	Pop.	Main Street Speed Limit	Average Annual Daily Traffic	Median Household Income	Per Capita Income
Coleville	353	45 mph	4,300	\$42,071	\$17,891
Walker	401	45 mph	4,000	\$55,149	N/A
Bridgeport	509	25 mph	4,200	\$107,500	\$40,170
Bridgeport Indian Colony	120	25 mph	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lee Vining	590	25 mph	3,600	\$107,500	\$24,616
Bishop	3,789	25 mph	15,300	\$76,948	\$36,047
Bishop Paiute Reservation	1,651	45 mph	N/A	N/A	N/A
Big Pine	1,570	35 mph	6,200	\$62,576	\$39,964
Big Pine Paiute Tribe	500	35 mph	6,200	N/A	N/A
Fort Independence Tribe	148	65 mph	6,300	N/A	N/A
Independence	761	25 mph	7,600	\$57,917	\$28,402
Lone Pine	1,580	25 mph	6,600	\$39,881	\$27,933
Lone Pine Paiute-Shoshone	350	45 mph	6,600	N/A	N/A

Equity and Justice40:

- The transformation of Highway 395 into a four-lane expressway has caused significant environmental, social, and economic disruptions across the Eastern Sierra, particularly affecting marginalized and Indigenous communities. These rural and Tribal communities often lack the necessary resources for grant writing, administration, and advocacy, relying on support from larger organizations like ESCOG. The Eastern Sierra's rural areas suffer from insufficient political representation and governmental capacity, hindering effective community engagement, vision development, and strategic planning to address the historical damages wrought by Highway 395's expansion.
- Nationally, Native Americans have the highest per capita pedestrian death rates, often due to high-speed roads lacking sidewalks in their communities (www.smartgrowthamerica.org). Along Highway 395, Tribal communities are particularly vulnerable as they are situated on the town's outskirts and are the first areas vehicles encounter. These reservations generally

lack traffic calming measures and pedestrian infrastructure, disconnecting them from town services like schools, stores, and healthcare.

- Highway 395, a key route for many, especially disadvantaged populations who often walk or bike, poses dangers due to high-speed traffic, lack of crosswalks, and poor lighting. Implementing effective pedestrian safety measures will enhance safe access to daily destinations and mobility for vulnerable groups, such as children, the elderly, and those with disabilities. ESCOG plans to use the funding to empower community organizations, helping historically underrepresented groups influence decisions on traffic calming and pedestrian safety. A comprehensive engagement strategy will ensure equitable distribution of safety investments. This will involve traditional workshops, digital charrettes, surveys, direct partnerships with community organizations and Tribes, and mobile workshops in local gathering spots to include those often overlooked.
- To rectify past inequities from Highway 395 and meet the Justice40 criteria, ESCOG will adopt a comprehensive, inclusive planning approach. This involves addressing historical and ongoing disparities in community planning and decision-making, enhancing mobility, and improving access to daily destinations. ESCOG will ensure extensive community engagement focusing on inclusivity, representing all groups including youth, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable populations. To meet the Justice 40 goals, ESCOG will use data-driven strategies to ensure that 40% of the project's benefits reach disadvantaged and Tribal communities equitably.

Facility Suitability:

- Originally a two-lane road, Highway 395 was expanded to four lanes to manage increased tourism in the Eastern Sierra, driven by outdoor recreation and Los Angeles's water rights acquisitions. This expansion eliminated on-street parking and other traffic-calming features to accommodate the wider highway. For example, freight traffic on Bishop Main Street has nearly doubled from 19.9% of all vehicles in 2010 to 34.5% in 2021. There have been no pedestrian improvements or traffic calming mitigations implemented within the communities since the highway was expanded to four lanes, and through traffic commonly does not differentiate between being on the highway and being in a town.
- Recreation and tourism are the economic foundations of Inyo and Mono County, with the economic benefits closely linked to the appeal of their downtown areas. Revitalizing Main Streets is a key objective in regional strategies like the Sierra Jobs First Strategy, the Eastern Sierra CEDS, and the City of Bishop Economic Development Plan. Mitigating highway traffic will facilitate housing development by creating suitable conditions for infill and mixed-use projects in downtown areas. Given the lack of greenfield development opportunities in the Eastern Sierra, infill remains the primary method for adding housing units. However, current truck traffic on Main Street creates unsafe and undesirable conditions for residential development.
- An inclusive planning process will be initiated to identify traffic calming measures along Highway 395, starting with comprehensive outreach to gather input from residents, Indigenous groups, local businesses, and other stakeholders. This effort will focus on understanding the specific needs and characteristics of each community. After collecting community feedback, the process will evaluate traffic calming options—like roundabouts, gateway features, enhanced lighting, pedestrian crossings, and streetscaping—based on their suitability to local priorities. Ongoing engagement will ensure that the final decisions reflect

community values and effectively signal to motorists that they are entering a community, enhancing safety and cohesion.

Community Engagement and Community-based Stewardship, Management, and Partnerships:

ESCOG is a key institution for community and economic development, housing, sustainable recreation, and climate resiliency across Inyo and Mono Counties. It has shaped a regional vision for prosperity through extensive community engagement from Death Valley to Antelope Valley. This vision supports initiatives such as Sierra Jobs First, the Eastern Sierra Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), and the Towns-to-Trails Plan for a non-motorized trail network across the region.

The key to this project is using funds to support community advocacy and engagement at the local level, particularly as the Eastern Sierra lacks non-volunteer community advocacy organizations in the 15 communities targeted by this application. To overcome engagement barriers in rural and Indigenous communities, ESCOG will implement a comprehensive strategy that combines traditional and innovative methods, ensuring inclusive participation and empowerment.

1. **Collaborative Community Workshops:** ESCOG will hold facilitated listening sessions and charrettes with residents, tribes, environmental advocates, and community organizations. These interactive sessions will identify highway impacts and solutions.
2. **Partnerships with Tribal and Local Leaders:** ESCOG will engage with tribal governments to ensure inclusion in developing solutions, and dedicated workshops will be provided for visioning solutions adjacent to or on Tribal reservation lands.
3. **Virtual Engagement Platforms:** Recognizing that not all residents can attend in-person meetings, virtual platforms will allow remote participation to ensure that underserved populations can fully engage in discussions.
4. **Mobile Community Engagement:** Traditional community engagement can be inaccessible for disadvantaged, Latino, and Tribal community members due to work conflicts, travel arrangements or other barriers. The ESCOG will arrange for mobile workshops to bring digital tools to provide spaces for community dialogue where residents are already gathering, including youth sports, street fairs, and other community events.
5. **Multilingual Engagement:** ESCOG will ensure inclusive community participation by offering materials and workshops in Spanish.

Partners will include the Bishop Paiute Tribe, the Big Pine Paiute Tribe, the Fort Independence Tribe, the Bridgeport Indian Colony, the Lone Pine Paiute Shoshone Tribe, the Big Pine Civic Club, the Independence Civic Club, the Mono Basin Regional Planning Advisory Committee, the Bridgeport Valley Regional Planning Advisory Committee, the Antelope Valley Regional Planning Advisory Committee, La Causa - Hispanic Voices for Community Improvement, the Bishop Area Chamber of Commerce, the Lone Pine Chamber of Commerce, the Lee Vining Chamber of Commerce, the Bridgeport Chamber of Commerce, the Antelope Valley Chamber of Commerce, and others. (Attachment K - LOS)

Equitable Development:

- Eastern Sierra communities are restricted from expanding beyond developed areas due to public land constraints, leading many to modify zoning laws for mixed-use housing in

commercial zones. Yet, current traffic conditions detract from the appeal of these infill housing developments. Community surveys indicate that 48% of respondents avoid downtown areas due to truck traffic. The Bishop Mixed-Use Overlay highlights pedestrian safety across Highway 395/Main Street as a significant concern. Efforts are underway with Caltrans to enhance safety at nonsignalized crossings with flashing beacons and signage. Still, more comprehensive treatments are needed to support and encourage housing developments along Main Street. This challenge is consistent across the project study area.

- Highway 395 poses a major obstacle to affordable housing in Inyo and Mono Counties due to noise, pollution, and safety issues. Implementing traffic calming measures such as reduced speed limits, expanded sidewalks, improved pedestrian crossings, and dedicated bike lanes can enhance downtown walkability and safety, fostering new housing opportunities. Currently, few homes exist along Highway 395 in both counties, yet there is a documented need for housing across all income levels. Effective traffic mitigations, including pedestrian safety enhancements and freight rerouting, are essential to attracting investment for infill housing development. (Attachment J)
- The project is intended to advance opportunities for those communities that have the least opportunity to develop a vision for land use, affordable housing options, and policy-making, especially those lacking planning infrastructure for their downtowns, including Big Pine, the Big Pine Tribe, Independence, Lone Pine, the Lone Pine Paiute Shoshone, Walker, and Coleville.

Climate Change Resiliency:

- Despite their small size, communities in the study area feel unsafe using alternative transportation due to current conditions, leading to reliance on vehicles. The Safe Sierra Streets project, in partnership with Caltrans District 9, aims to enhance multi-modal transportation options to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and lower greenhouse gas emissions. The focus is on developing plans ready for implementation that maximize Complete Street solutions and include climate-resilient infrastructure improvements to address heat island effects and other climate change impacts. (Attachment J)
- Mono and Inyo counties have climate action plans and have established baselines of their carbon emissions to measure their progress in reducing them. Mono County's 2022 Resource Efficiency Plan identifies a prominent goal to 'Improve Connectivity and Efficiency of Resident and Employee Transportation,' citing on-road vehicles as the single largest source of Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Mono County. Aging infrastructure along US 395 is becoming less resilient to extreme weather events and climate-related stressors. The Caltrans District 9 Climate Change Adaptation Priorities Report has identified critical infrastructure along US 395 in the grant project area as priority assets vulnerable to flooding and extreme temperature changes from climate change. These findings will be incorporated into the planning process to develop solutions that are climate resilient. This project will help align local and State agencies' project priorities to reduce VMT and make communities more resilient to the effects of climate change, while enhancing the safety and sustainability for residents, visitors, and the local economy.

Workforce Development and Economic Opportunity:

Workforce Development: Through the California Jobs First effort, ESCOG is partnering with Cerro Coso Community College, Mortherlode Job Training Center, the Sierra Business Council and others to develop job pathways to fill capacity gaps in professional positions in the Eastern Sierra, including land management, planning and hospitality. Cerro Coso Community College will be launching the new associate degree program in January 2025 with job training opportunities in GIS mapping, planning, and land management, with a requirement for work experience. This grant will provide opportunities for job training experience to assist with outreach and engagement, especially tribal engagement, translation services, and other support services that will facilitate future regional capacity building and increased wages for disadvantaged students.

Economic Opportunity: Downtown revitalization through traffic impact mitigation is a key goal in several regional economic strategies, including the Sierra Jobs First Initiative, Eastern Sierra CEDS, Bishop Strategic Plan, and Inyo County General Plan. Nearly half of all workers in the region are in the tourism sector, earning under \$50,000 annually (Sierra Jobs First, 2024). Tourism, primarily driven by low-revenue activities like fishing and hiking, significantly contributes to local government revenue through the Transient Occupancy Tax, accounting for 27.31% to 56.3% of general fund revenues (City of Bishop and Town of Mammoth Lakes FY 24-25 Budgets). The *2022 Eastern Sierra Business Resource Center Business Plan*, which catalyzed the establishment of the first Small Business Development Center office in the region, identified tourist attraction into downtowns as a key opportunity to drive small business development, noting “destination development is needed to attract passersby to stop and explore.” Traffic mitigation in commercial areas is crucial for creating vibrant, pedestrian-friendly downtowns that attract residents and tourists, as stated in the 2015 Bishop Economic Development Plan, and to broaden and enhance regional economic prospects.

Planning Integration:

The Safe Sierra Streets project directly supports previous planning efforts completed by Inyo and Mono Counties, Tribal governments, the City of Bishop, and Caltrans District 9. The scope of this effort includes conducting a planning audit of existing plans to identify gaps in community engagement, assess community support and suitability for existing planning recommendations, update outdated plans as needed based on community engagement, and advance downtown plans to a Project Study Report to guide Caltrans funding in the future. Many communities in the study have previously completed Main Streets improvement plans either in part or comprehensively, including Lone Pine, Independence, Fort Independence Reservation, the City of Bishop, Lee Vining, and Bridgeport. Several communities have had little or no community engagement to inform a vision or plan for their Main Streets, including the Lone Pine Paiute Shoshone Tribe, the Big Pine Tribe, the Bishop Paiute Tribe, and the Antelope Valley, which includes the communities of Walker and Coleville. Please refer to the Planning Document Analysis (Attachment L) included in the attachments to this proposal. Because Highway 395 is under Caltrans jurisdiction, implementation of locally developed community plans is contingent on the funding priorities and project readiness requirements of Caltrans. This funding is necessary for Eastern Sierra communities to be empowered to advance their planning efforts toward shovel readiness in partnership with Caltrans through the development of the US 395 Main Streets PSR.

Eastern Sierra Council of Governments
Safe Sierra Streets: Reclaiming Highway 395 Main Streets
Scope of Work and Budget Description

Scope of Work Description

Task 1. Project Initiation

1.1 Establish Memorandums of Understanding with Regional Agency Partners

- Upon grant award, ESCOG will work with Regional Agency Partners to refine the project scope and budget to ensure alignment with community and transportation safety improvement goals.
- Develop and execute Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) between ESCOG and key regional partners, including Mono County, Inyo County, the City of Bishop, Tribes, Caltrans, and other partners outlining project management responsibilities, reporting requirements, and financial obligations.
- Clarify roles, responsibilities, and expectations for the collaboration on the project.

1.2 Procure Consultants

- Prepare and distribute a Request for Proposals (RFP) to identify and hire consultants specializing in transportation planning, complete streets, community engagement, and urban design.
- ESCOG anticipates preparing two RFPs. First, ESCOG will prepare an RFP for Task 2, Task 3, and Task 4 to achieve economies of scale for this regional planning effort. ESCOG will prepare a second RFP for Task 5 to conduct engagement for and prepare the updated Bishop Area Access and Circulation Study.

1.3 Project Kick-Off

- Organize a formal project initiation meeting with all stakeholders and consultants to outline the project goals, deliverables, timeline, and coordination mechanisms.
- Establish communication protocols and a project management framework.

Task 2. Existing Conditions Analysis

2.1 Preliminary Research and Existing Plan Document Review

- Conduct a thorough review of existing transportation plans, community visioning efforts, land use documents, and other previous studies related to U.S. Highway 395.
- Assess the socio-economic, environmental, and transportation-related data of Mono and Inyo Counties.

2.2 Establish Community Engagement Working Group

- Form working groups within communities with representatives from local communities, Tribes, businesses, non-profits, and key stakeholders to provide input and guide community engagement throughout the project.

2.3 Community Engagement and Visioning

- Organize public outreach and visioning sessions to gather input on the community's needs and aspirations for U.S. Highway 395.
- Utilize surveys, design charrettes, virtual and mobile workshops, and public meetings to ensure diverse voices are included in shaping the future design of the corridor.

2.4 Existing Conditions and Community Engagement Summary Memo

- Summarize key findings from the existing conditions analysis and community input, including safety issues, pedestrian and bicycle accessibility, and traffic concerns.
- Present these findings to the community engagement working group for review.

Task 3. Draft Complete Street Regional Project Study Report (PSR)

3.1 Administrative Draft Complete Street Regional Project Study Report

- Develop an administrative draft that outlines potential design concepts for each community in the study area for transforming U.S. Highway 395 into a complete street that prioritizes traffic calming, pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure, public spaces, and gateway features.
- Include preliminary engineering recommendations for locations of roadway improvements, traffic calming, gateway elements and streetscaping, including landscaping palettes appropriate for the high desert climate of the Eastern Sierra.
- Include a detailed alternatives analysis and cost, schedule, and scope information, including estimated schedule and costs for environmental mitigation and permit compliance.
- It will include an inventory of known environmental resources, identification of potential environmental issues and constraints, the type of environmental document anticipated for NEPA and/or CEQA compliance, and potential mitigation measures and estimated costs.
 - We anticipate environmental mitigation and constraints will be minimal due to project scope being primarily located on existing infrastructure and requiring limited land disturbance
- Completion of the PSR will allow inclusion in Inyo and Mono Counties' Regional Transportation Improvement Programs (RTIP), providing the opportunity to fund subsequent project phases through formula or discretionary sources.

3.2 Draft Complete Street Regional Project Study Report

- Release a draft report to agency partners, stakeholders, and the community for review and feedback.
- Provide opportunities for input on the proposed designs and recommendations through public meetings and workshops.

3.3 Community Engagement Workshops

- Conduct workshops to gather feedback on the draft report and design concepts, ensuring that residents, businesses, and local organizations are fully engaged in the decision-making process.

3.4 Agency Partner Review and Board Presentations

- Present the draft report to regional agency partners, including Caltrans and local governments, for review and feedback.
- Hold formal presentations to the ESCOG Board and other relevant bodies to gather further input and guidance.

4. Final Complete Street Regional Project Study Report

4.1 Administrative Final Complete Street Regional Project Study Report

Attachment B

- Incorporate feedback from community engagement, agency partners, and board presentations into an administrative final report for internal review.

4.2 Public Final Complete Street Regional Project Study Report

- Publish the final report for public dissemination, ensuring transparency and accessibility to all community members and stakeholders.

4.3 Community Workshops

- Host additional workshops to present the final report and outline the next steps for implementation.
- Address any remaining questions or concerns from the public and agency partners.

4.4 Agency Partner Review and Board Presentations

- Finalize the report based on any additional feedback from partners and formalize presentations to the ESCOG Board and other decision-making bodies for approval.

5. Bishop Area Access and Circulation Study

5.1 Existing Conditions Analysis

- Conduct a thorough review of existing transportation plans, community visioning efforts, land use documents, and other previous studies related to U.S. Highway 395, specifically the *2007 Bishop Area Access and Circulation Study*.
- Conduct a detailed analysis of traffic patterns, pedestrian and bicycle access, and circulation issues specific to the Bishop area, including key intersections and roadways.

5.2 Community Engagement Workshops and Surveys

- Gather input from Bishop area residents and businesses through workshops and surveys to identify priority access and mobility concerns.

5.3 Draft Route Alternatives Analysis

- Develop draft alternatives for improving traffic flow, pedestrian and bicycle access, and overall safety in Bishop.
- Present the alternatives for public and stakeholder review and input.
- Determine public support for alternate route concepts.

5.4 Draft City Mobility Alternatives Analysis

- Assess potential mobility improvements through Bishop to alleviate congestion within the downtown area, including new arterial or collector roads, pedestrian and bicycle access and other multi-model circulation improvements.
- Present the alternatives for public and stakeholder review and input.
- Determine public support for Mobility Alternative Concepts.
- Draft update for City of Bishop General Plan Mobility Element as needed.

5.5 Final Bishop Area Access and Circulation Study

- Incorporate public and agency feedback into the final study, detailing prioritized improvements and actionable steps for enhancing access and circulation in Bishop.
- Present the final study to the ESCOG Board to recommend for City Council consideration and present to Bishop City Council for approval.

6. ESCOG Project Management and Grant Administration

Task 6.1: Technical Assistance and Project Management

Attachment B

- ESCOG's administrative team will provide ongoing monitoring of the Highway 395 project, ensuring compliance with grant requirements, and that all deliverables are on track for completion by the proposed deadline.

Task 6.2: Grant Administration, Invoicing and Reporting

- ESCOG will submit regular progress reports, including financial and performance updates, to relevant state and federal transportation agencies to monitor the project's progress.

Scope of Work Deliverables:

- MOU documents with regional agency partners
- Existing conditions analysis report
- Community engagement summary memo
- Draft and final Complete Street Regional Project Study Reports
- Bishop Area Access and Circulation Study Report
- Reporting as required by grant agreement

Budget Description:

ESCOG is seeking an 80:20 match grant award for the Safe Sierra Streets: Reclaiming Highway 395 Main Streets project. Upon grant award, the ESCOG will convene project partners to develop and execute Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) between ESCOG and key regional partners, including Mono County, Inyo County, the City of Bishop, Tribes, Caltrans, and other partners outlining project management responsibilities, reporting requirements, and financial obligations. Non-federal funding will be provided with cash and in-kind contributions by project partners, including the ESCOG. Commitments for the submission and funding of this project have been provide by Resolution of the relevant agency, and are included below.

Attachment B

Safe Sierra Street: Reclaiming Highway 395 Main Streets Budget

Eastern Sierra Council of Governments

Safe Sierra Streets: Reclaiming Highway 395 Main Streets

Task	Activity	Total Cost	Federal Funds	Non-Federal Funds
1	Project Initiation			
1.1	Establish MOUs with Regional Agency Partners	\$ 5,000	\$ 4,000	\$ 1,000
1.2	Procure Consultants	\$ 5,000	\$ 4,000	\$ 1,000
1.3	Project Kick-Off	\$ 5,000	\$ 4,000	\$ 1,000
	Subtotal	\$ 15,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 3,000
2	Existing Conditions Analysis		80.000%	
2.2	Preliminary Research and Existing Plan Document Review	\$ 26,500	\$ 21,200	\$ 5,300
2.3	Establish Community Engagement Working Group	\$ 13,200	\$ 10,560	\$ 2,640
2.4	Community Engagement and Visioning	\$ 52,800	\$ 42,240	\$ 10,560
2.5	Existing Conditions and Community Engagement Summary Memo	\$ 39,600	\$ 31,680	\$ 7,920
	Subtotal	\$ 132,100	\$ 105,680	\$ 26,420
3	Draft Complete Street Regional Project Study Report			
3.1	Administrative Draft Complete Street Regional Project Study Report	\$ 320,000	\$ 256,000	\$ 64,000
3.2	Draft Complete Street Regional Project Study Report	\$ 260,000	\$ 208,000	\$ 52,000
3.3	Community Engagement Workshops	\$ 83,950	\$ 67,160	\$ 16,790
3.4	Agency Partner Review and Board Presentations	\$ 21,000	\$ 16,800	\$ 4,200
	Subtotal	\$ 684,950	\$ 547,960	\$ 136,990
4	Final Complete Street Regional Project Study Report			
4.1	Administrative Final Complete Street Regional Project Study Report	\$ 280,000	\$ 224,000	\$ 56,000
4.2	Public Final Complete Street Regional Project Study Report	\$ 170,940	\$ 136,750	\$ 34,190
4.3	Community Workshops	\$ 58,600	\$ 46,880	\$ 11,720
4.4	Agency Partner Review and Board Presentations	\$ 14,650	\$ 11,725	\$ 2,925
	Subtotal	\$ 524,190	\$ 419,355	\$ 104,835
5	Bishop Area Access and Circulation Study			
5.1	Existing Conditions Analysis	\$ 28,500	\$ 22,800	\$ 5,700
5.2	Community Engagement Workshops and Surveys	\$ 67,500	\$ 54,000	\$ 13,500
5.3	Draft Route Alternatives Analysis	\$ 190,000	\$ 152,000	\$ 38,000
5.4	Draft City Mobility Alternatives Analysis	\$ 92,000	\$ 73,600	\$ 18,400
5.5	Final Bishop Area Access and Circulation Study	\$ 120,000	\$ 96,000	\$ 24,000
	Subtotal	\$ 498,000	\$ 398,400	\$ 99,600
6	ESCOG Project Management and Grant Administration			
6.1	Technical Assistance and Project Management	\$ 122,800	\$ 98,240	\$ 24,560
6.2	Grant Administration, Invoicing and Reporting	\$ 50,000	\$ 40,000	\$ 10,000
6.3	Indirect Costs	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000	\$ -
	Subtotal	\$ 272,800	\$ 238,240	\$ 34,560
	Total	\$ 2,127,040	\$ 1,721,635	\$ 405,405

RESOLUTION NO. 2024-02

**A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
OF THE EASTERN SIERRA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO SUBMIT AN
APPLICATION FOR THE U.S DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
RECONNECTING COMMUNITIES PILOT PROGRAM**

WHEREAS, on January 7, 2020, the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments convened as an established Joint Powers Authority as ratified by the votes of the governing bodies of its individual Member Agencies, understanding that it is necessary and desirable for the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments as a Joint Powers Authority to speak and to function on behalf of the region and to collectively identify and deliver opportunities to benefit the interests of Member Agencies' constituents; and

WHEREAS the Member Agencies agreed that the creation of a regional Joint Powers Authority that functions as a separate and discreet legal entity from individual Member Agencies would enable the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments to maximize and take advantage of opportunities for the region; and

WHEREAS, the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments Joint Powers Authority (ESCOG) was organized to identify and apply for funding resources and receive funding for the planning and implementation of programs of regional impact or significance, and to implement such programs upon approval of the governing bodies of each Member Agency; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Directors of the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments is an eligible applicant for the U.S Department of Transportation Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program funding opportunity; and

WHEREAS, the U.S Department of Transportation Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program would have inter-jurisdictional benefits in Inyo and Mono Counties, which would enhance regional collaboration, advance the vitality of Eastern Sierra communities, and reinforce the regional identity of the iconic Eastern Sierra; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Directors of the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments that the Executive Director is authorized to submit a U.S Department of Transportation Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program on behalf of the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments.

PASSED AND ADOPTED 28th day of August, 2024 by the following vote:

AYES: Chair Bob Gardner, Vice Chair Stephen Muchovej, Board Member Trina Orrill, Board Member Lynda Salcido, Board Member John Wentworth, Board Member Chris Bubser, Board Member Karen Schwartz

Attachment B

NOES: N/A
ABSTAIN: N/A
ABSENT: Board Member Jeff Griffiths

ATTEST: Angela Plaisted
Clerk of the Board

Bob Gardner (Aug 30, 2024 20:45 PDT)
Bob Gardner
Chairperson

RESOLUTION NO. 2024-21

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BISHOP, STATE OF CALIFORNIA, AUTHORIZING THE EASTERN SIERRA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION FOR THE U.S DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION RECONNECTING COMMUNITIES PILOT PROGRAM

WHEREAS, on January 7, 2020, the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments convened as an established Joint Powers Authority as ratified by the votes of the governing bodies of its individual Member Agencies, understanding that it is necessary and desirable for the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments as a Joint Powers Authority to speak and to function on behalf of the region and to collectively identify and deliver opportunities to benefit the interests of Member Agencies' constituents; and

WHEREAS the Member Agencies agreed that the creation of a regional Joint Powers Authority that functions as a separate and discreet legal entity from individual Member Agencies would enable the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments to maximize and take advantage of opportunities for the region; and

WHEREAS, the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments Joint Powers Authority was organized to identify and apply for funding resources and receive funding for the planning and implementation of programs of regional impact or significance, and to implement such programs upon approval of the governing bodies of each Member Agency; and

WHEREAS, the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments is an eligible applicant for the U.S Department of Transportation Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program funding opportunity; and

WHEREAS, the U.S Department of Transportation Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program would have inter-jurisdictional benefits in Inyo and Mono Counties, which would enhance regional collaboration, advance the vitality of Eastern Sierra communities, and reinforce the regional identity of the iconic Eastern Sierra; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Bishop that the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments is authorized to submit a U.S Department of Transportation Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program on behalf of the Eastern Sierra.

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED this 23rd day of September 2024.



Jose Garcia, Mayor

ATTEST: 

Robin Picken, City Clerk



STATE OF CALIFORNIA }
COUNTY OF INYO }
CITY OF BISHOP }

I, Robin Picken, City Clerk for the City of Bishop, do hereby certify that the whole number of members of the City Council of said City of Bishop is five (5); that the foregoing Resolution No. 2024-21 was duly passed and adopted by said City Council; approved and signed by the Mayor of said City; and attested by the City Clerk of said City, all at a regular meeting of said City Council, held on September 23, 2024, and that the same was so passed and adopted by the following roll call vote.

AYES: Ellis, Schwartz, Muchovej, Kong, Garcia

ABSENT: None

NOES: None

DISQUALIFIED: None

WITNESS, my hand and the seal of the City of Bishop this 24th day of September, 2024.



Robin Picken, City Clerk
CITY OF BISHOP



Attachment B
In the Rooms of the Board of Supervisors

County of Inyo, State of California

I, HEREBY CERTIFY, that at a meeting of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Inyo, State of California, held in their rooms at the County Administrative Center in Independence on the 24th day of September 2024 an order was duly made and entered as follows:

CAO –
*Reconnecting
Communities Grant
and Reso. #2024-28*

The agenda item was moved from the Consent Agenda to the Regular Agenda for further discussion at the request of Supervisor Roeser.

Executive Director of Regional Coordination for Eastern Sierra Council of Governments Elaine Kabala provided clarification on the scope of language included in the grant application and whether it might address concerns brought up in the 2007 Bishop Area Circulation Study. Kabala answered questions on the possibility of a current study being performed with additional opportunities for public input.

Moved by Supervisor Roeser and seconded by Supervisor Griffiths to:

- A) Adopt Resolution No. 2024-28, titled, "A Resolution of the Board of Supervisors, County of Inyo, State of California, Authorizing the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments to Submit an Application for the U.S. Department of Transportation Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program;" and
- B) Approve and authorize the Chairperson to sign a letter of support for the grant application.

Motion carried unanimously.

WITNESS my hand and the seal of said Board this 24th
Day of September, 2024



NATHAN GREENBERG
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

By: _____

Routing
CC Purchasing Personnel Auditor CAO X Other: DATE: September 27, 2024

RESOLUTION NO. 2024-28

**A RESOLUTION OF BOARD OF SUPERVISORS,
COUNTY OF INYO, STATE OF CALIFORNIA,
AUTHORIZING THE EASTERN SIERRA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS TO
SUBMIT AN APPLICATION FOR THE U.S DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION RECONNECTING COMMUNITIES PILOT PROGRAM**

WHEREAS, on January 7, 2020, the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments convened as an established Joint Powers Authority as ratified by the votes of the governing bodies of its individual Member Agencies, understanding that it is necessary and desirable for the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments as a Joint Powers Authority to speak and to function on behalf of the region and to collectively identify and deliver opportunities to benefit the interests of Member Agencies' constituents; and

WHEREAS the Member Agencies agreed that the creation of a regional Joint Powers Authority that functions as a separate and discreet legal entity from individual Member Agencies would enable the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments to maximize and take advantage of opportunities for the region; and

WHEREAS, the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments Joint Powers Authority was organized to identify and apply for funding resources and receive funding for the planning and implementation of programs of regional impact or significance, and to implement such programs upon approval of the governing bodies of each Member Agency; and

WHEREAS, the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments is an eligible applicant for the U.S Department of Transportation Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program funding opportunity; and

WHEREAS, the U.S Department of Transportation Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program would have inter-jurisdictional benefits in Inyo and Mono Counties, which would enhance regional collaboration, advance the vitality of Eastern Sierra communities, and reinforce the regional identity of the iconic Eastern Sierra; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Supervisors, County of Inyo, State of California, that the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments is authorized to submit a U.S Department of Transportation Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program on behalf of the Eastern Sierra.

PASSED AND ADOPTED 24th day of September, 2024 by the following vote:

AYES: -5- Supervisors Griffiths, Roeser, Orrill, Kingsley, and Marcellin
NOES: -0-
ABSTAIN: -0-

ABSENT: -0-


Matt Kingsley, Board Chair

ATTEST: Nate Greenberg
Clerk of the Board

By: 
Assistant Clerk of the Board

Note: Due to the Mono County Board 2023 Attachments B were not Board meetings in September to approve a resolution for this application, however the Board of Supervisors provided this resolution for the same project under State funding in 2023. ESCOG will be requesting a Resolution from the Mono County Board of Supervisors at their meeting held October 22, 2024. The Mono County Planning Director and Local Transportation Commission have provided a letter of support for this project and Mono County Board Members sitting on the ESCOG Board have approved the resolution.



R23-069

**A RESOLUTION OF THE MONO COUNTY
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AUTHORIZING THE EASTERN SIERRA COUNCIL OF
GOVERNMENTS TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION FOR THE CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION RECONNECTING COMMUNITIES:
HIGHWAYS TO BOULEVARDS GRANT**

WHEREAS, on January 7, 2020, the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments convened as an established Joint Powers Authority as ratified by the votes of the governing bodies of its individual Member Agencies, understanding that it is necessary and desirable for the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments as a Joint Powers Authority to speak and to function on behalf of the region and to collectively identify and deliver opportunities to benefit the interests of Member Agencies' constituents; and

WHEREAS, the Member Agencies agreed that the creation of a regional Joint Powers Authority that functions as a separate and discreet legal entity from individual Member Agencies would enable the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments to maximize and take advantage of opportunities for the region; and

WHEREAS, the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments Joint Powers Authority (ESCOG) was organized to identify and apply for funding resources and receive funding for the planning and implementation of programs of regional impact or significance, and to implement such programs upon approval of the governing bodies of each Member Agency; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Directors of the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments is an eligible applicant for the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Reconnecting Communities: Highways to Boulevards grant funding opportunity; and

NOW, THEREFORE, THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF MONO RESOLVES that: the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments is authorized to submit a Caltrans Reconnecting Communities: Highways to Boulevards grant on behalf of the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments.

PASSED, APPROVED and ADOPTED this 5th day of September 2023, by the following vote, to wit:

AYES: Supervisors Duggan, Gardner, Kreitz, Peters, and Salcido.

NOES: None.

Attachment B

1 **ABSENT:** None.

2 **ABSTAIN:** None.

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Rhonda Duggan (Sep 6, 2023 13:50 PDT)
9 **Rhonda Duggan, Chair**
10 **Mono County Board of Supervisors**

11 **ATTEST:**

11 **APPROVED AS TO FORM:**

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15 **Clerk of the Board**

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Stacey Simon (Sep 6, 2023 12:18 PDT)
15 **County Counsel**

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Attachment B



Jennifer Kreitz-District One Rhonda Duggan-District Two Bob Gardner- District Three
John Peters-District Four Lynda Salcido-District Five

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS COUNTY OF MONO

P.O. BOX 715, BRIDGEPORT, CALIFORNIA 93517

(760) 932-5530

BOS@mono.ca.gov

Queenie Barnard, Clerk of the Board

September 5, 2023

Dear Highways to Boulevards Grant Selection Committee,

For 50+ years, U.S. Highway 395 in Mono and Inyo Counties has been engineered with singular goal of moving goods and traffic quickly and efficiently through the communities we call home. Sadly, this highway-oriented design focus has rarely considered the negative impacts that fast-moving passenger and freight highway traffic has on the communities U.S. 395 bisects. While Highway 395 serves as Main Street as it runs through the heart of our Eastern Sierra communities, its highway-focused design has been at the expense of pedestrian safety, alternative modes of transportation, and the overall livability of our communities. Highway 395 is a barrier between children and their schools, causes significant noise and air pollution, and makes properties along 395 undesirable for both commerce and residential uses alike.

For these reasons and more, the Mono County Board of Supervisors have joined the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments (ESCOG) and Caltrans District 9 (D9) as a co-applicant for the State of California Reconnecting Communities: Highways to Boulevards (RC:H2B) Grant as a "Corridor" applicant. Mono County has suffered the ill effects caused by freeway-style highway construction on U.S. 395 and endeavors through this opportunity to advance the visions of our communities for a safer and more vibrant downtown. We seek to improve conditions for all users of U.S. 395 and reconnect the communities that have been bisected by the U.S. 395. We anticipate that a project as a part of this grant could improve walkability and safety for all users while focusing on the unique needs of Eastern Sierra communities along U.S. 395.

This is a catalytic opportunity for our community and the Eastern Sierra region, and we are grateful for the opportunity to work with our communities to envision and design solutions to address their concerns. As a co-applicant, we are ready to commit our support (in-kind contributions, staff resources, project engagement) through to the end of the RC:H2B process should ESCOG, D9 and its co-applicants be awarded the grant. We believe this grant presents a rare opportunity to advance the vision of Eastern Sierra communities located on the U.S. 395 corridor to live in safe and beautiful neighborhoods, complete with vibrant and prosperous downtowns.

Sincerely,


Rhonda Duggan (Sep 6, 2023 13:50 PDT)

Rhonda Duggan
Chair, Mono County Board of Supervisors