



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 a 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.