

Agenda Report

TO: CITY COUNCIL

DATE: January 22, 2001

FROM: City Manager

SUBJECT: Authorization to Apply for a Grant from Office of Traffic Safety

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that City Council adopt a resolution approving an application to the Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) for a \$57,000 grant to develop an integrated police and public works accident database.

BACKGROUND:

The Transportation Advisory Commission (TAC) reviewed the proposed OTS grant application at their January meeting and the commission approved the application without comment.

The California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) is a State agency established by the governor in 1967 to administer the federally mandated California Highway Safety Plan. OTS is charged with reducing fatalities, injuries and economic loss resulting from motor vehicle crashes in the State. OTS administers federal traffic safety funds and makes available a portion of these federal funds to public agencies in the form of safety grants. The goal of the grants is to help local communities develop traffic safety programs that will contribute toward the reduction of fatalities and injuries in the state.

Each November, OTS requests proposals addressing traffic safety problems from all interested and eligible agencies. OTS tracks the progress of the various grants and encourages successful programs to be expanded statewide. It is expected that OTS will fund about 500 grants in 2001 in seven regions. The total allocation of funds for grants is about \$80.3 million per year.

Grant recipients are selected in nine priority program areas:

- *Alcohol and Other Drugs* – to promote the reduction of deaths attributable to drugs.
- *Occupant Protection* – to promote increased compliance with safety restraint laws.
- *Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety* – the increase of safety awareness for these modes.
- *Traffic Records* – the development of records systems to identify safety problems.
- *Emergency Medical Services* – provision of rapid treatment for accident victims.
- *Roadway Safety* – improved traffic engineering services to reduce safety problems.
- *Police Traffic Services* – improved enforcement programs to reduce traffic collisions.
- *Motorcycle Safety* – education and training programs to improve motorcycle safety.

- *Speed Control* – programs to encourage compliance with speed laws, such as the purchase of radar speed trailers.

The Pasadena Police Department is currently under consideration for a \$55,000 grant for disbursement in FY 2001 for a speed reduction and public education program on speeding. If successful, the grant will purchase two speed trailers, thirteen new hand-held radar units, a video camera to enforce regulations requiring motorists to stop for school buses when discharging children, and a lap-top computer and projector for public school education programs.

Public Works and Transportation plans to submit a request to OTS for a \$57,000 grant in the Traffic Records program category. The proposed grant is a direct result of several recommendations included in an OTS audit of engineering and enforcement operations in Pasadena. The voluntary audit by OTS in Pasadena was completed in the summer of 2000 and reviewed by TAC in the fall. The audit concluded that overall the Police and Public Works operated effectively and cooperation was lauded in several areas. The audit concluded, however, that the existing traffic database should be improved in several areas to enable the enforcement and engineering efforts to be more coordinated and efficient, including:

- The police and public works departments compile traffic collision data in two separate, incompatible database formats which limits the use, accuracy and coordination of studies and programs.
- The police department needs a complete and timely traffic collision and violation database to appropriately allocate manpower to areas of need.
- Correlation of DUI collisions with arrests is not available from the existing data to measure and track staff productivity.
- The existing database does not include traffic count data that is critical in properly evaluating high accident locations.

A number of years ago, a more timely database of traffic collisions was maintained by Public Works and Transportation. The collision data were compiled from the original collision reports by traffic staff; however, this program required considerable man-hours of effort and manpower reductions necessitated its termination. The public works staff began relying on the Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System (SWITRS) for collision data, which is generally six months out of date. The police began compiling their own abbreviated database of current information to properly allocate enforcement personnel. These two record systems are not compatible or interchangeable.

The proposed \$57,000 grant will significantly reduce the staffing requirements to produce a timely, joint database that can be used for both engineering and enforcement programs.

It is proposed to use Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software to scan and compile the collision report data from the original hand written reports. The OCR software, when properly formatted, will automatically read and compile data from the CHP 555 form (Traffic Collision Report form) into a database. Staff will check the formatted data for accuracy, but will not input the data. Manpower requirements will be minimized with the proposed data organization process.

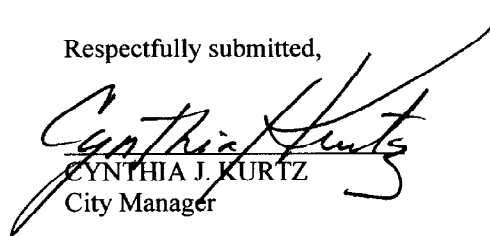
The collision data will be stored in a new data server that is accessible to both the police and public works. The server will be equipped with a security system to allow the police to store and use confidential citation/violation/warrant information not available to the public works staff. The server will also contain traffic volume information, traffic signal timing data, traffic congestion information, as well as the existing SWITRS data.

The grant will provide hardware that includes two workstations, a scanner, and data server; software will include OCR reader and database program. A fiber communications link between the police and public works departments will allow high-speed data retrieval. The equipment and software is expected to cost about \$57,000 to purchase and install. The grant will provide full funding for the program. This grant application was reviewed by TAC at their January meeting.

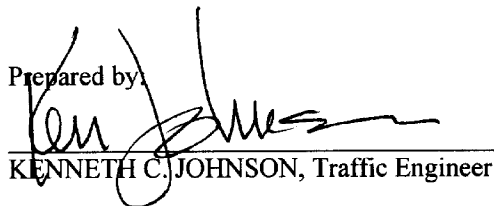
FISCAL IMPACT:

The Office of Traffic Safety grant will fully fund the proposed program. Data input to the system can be undertaken with the Optical Character Recognition software with no additional staff.


Respectfully submitted,


CYNTHIA J. KURTZ
City Manager

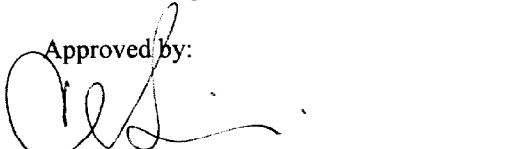
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