

Association of Bay Area Governments
ABAG Administrative Committee

December 13, 2024

Agenda Item 6c

Authorization to Receive \$1.6 Million From the Bay Area Toll Authority to Advance Regional Conservation and Climate Resilience Projects (Emeryville Crescent Sea Level Rise Adaptation Project and the Pacific Flyway Center's Walk in the Marsh Project)

Subject:

The Association of Bay Area Governments/San Francisco Estuary Partnership is partnering with the Bay Area Toll Authority to advance two regionally significant multi-benefit conservation and climate resilience projects; the Emeryville Crescent Sea Level Rise Adaptation Project and the Pacific Flyway Center's Walk in the Marsh Project.

Background:

The Association of Bay Area Governments/San Francisco Estuary Partnership is partnering with the Bay Area Toll Authority (BATA) to advance two significant multi-benefit projects that advance conservation and climate resilience while protecting bridge assets.

Emeryville Crescent Sea Level Rise Adaptation Project

The Estuary Partnership will receive funding from BATA to contribute \$500,000 towards the Emeryville Crescent project which will support advancing critical innovative adaptation strategies for the Crescent that may be replicated elsewhere around the region as well.

The Emeryville Crescent is a dynamic area on the east side of the San Francisco Bay shoreline with major transportation assets, public access, habitat, and cultural sites at risk from rising sea levels. This area includes a range of land uses, including residential, industrial and business, wetlands and natural shorelines, recreational areas and a major transportation corridor, including the approach to the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge. No comprehensive plan for this subregion exists that considers future climate change conditions, community needs and adaptation strategies, including green and grey solutions along the shoreline.

The Estuary Partnership is partnering with Caltrans, East Bay Regional Parks District, City of Emeryville, City of Oakland, East Bay Municipal Utilities District, Bay Area Toll Authority, SF Bay Conservation and Development Commission, and community and Tribal partners to advance a holistic and comprehensive adaptation strategy for the Emeryville Crescent region. The Estuary

Partnership has launched an initial Community and Tribal Visioning effort and is seeking additional funding to conduct a vulnerability assessment and adaptation strategy.

The project advances Estuary Blueprint Actions 1, 2, 3, and 4 focused on climate adaptation and equity.

Pacific Flyway Center's Walk in the Marsh Project

The Estuary Partnership will receive funding from BATA to contribute \$1.1 million towards the completion of the Pacific Flyway Center's Walk in the Marsh project.

Located in the North Bay at the edge of the Suisun Marsh, the Pacific Flyway Center's "Walk in the Marsh" project aims to enhance and create 124 acres of managed wetlands, with almost four miles of trails, boardwalks and interpretive elements. The experience will highlight the ecological benefits of the region's resting, nesting and feeding grounds for thousands of migrating shorebirds and waterfowl along the Pacific Flyway, as well as numerous other wetland-dependent species. Positioned on the edge of the Suisun Marsh, the project will provide an opportunity for public engagement and interpretive education that is rare for that area. The project meets a regional need for environmental education, public access and enjoyment, and habitat enhancement and is located adjacent to and will enhance the I-80/I-680 Interchange.

The project has received all required permits and is ready for construction. It has the support of Solano County, the City of Fairfield, and the California Legislators and Congressional Representatives representing the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta area. Partners on the project include California Waterfowl, Ducks Unlimited, National Audubon Society, University of California Davis College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, International Bird Rescue, and the Suisun Resource Conservation District.

The project proponents have declared their intent to nominate the project site as a Priority Conservation Area (PCA) during the upcoming PCA nomination process. The PCA Program supports Plan Bay Area strategies to adapt to sea level rise, protect and manage high-value conservation lands, and modernize and expand parks, trails, and recreation facilities by formally identifying lands in need of protection and/or management to maintain valuable ecological and social benefits. Indicative of the multiple benefits of the project site, the Pacific Flyway Center is eligible for PCA designation as Natural Lands, Regional Recreation, and Climate Adaptation.

PCA designation would allow access to future funding through the PCA Grant Program and, by highlighting the regional importance of this area, potentially make the project more competitive for other funding.

The project implements the San Francisco Estuary Blueprint Action 12, 24, and 25 focused on maximizing habitat benefits of managed ponds, providing public access and recreational opportunities compatible with wildlife and supporting Estuary-oriented outreach and education.

Issues:

None identified.

Recommendations:

Staff recommends the ABAG Administrative Committee authorize the Association of Bay Area Governments/San Francisco Estuary Partnership to receive \$1.6 million from the Bay Area Toll Authority to advance regional conservation and climate resilience projects.

Attachments:

None



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