

Supplemental Attachment 1



February 22, 2018

CITY COUNCIL

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Mayor

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Councilmember

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Michelle Greene

The Honorable Hannah-Beth Jackson
State Capitol, Room 2032
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Funding requests for Fiscal Year 18-19

Dear Senator Jackson:

The City of Goleta is presently pursuing two projects of great significance to the City: (1) a habitat plan and restoration of the Ellwood Mesa, a popular, coastal public open space and home annually to thousands of listed Monarch butterflies, whose overwintering habitat there is under threat due to the loss of more than 1,000 eucalyptus trees resulting from drought and disease; and, (2) the Goleta Train Depot project, which would facilitate daily commuter rail travel to Goleta on the newly re-timed Pacific Surfliner service and reduce vehicle miles traveled and emissions.

We respectfully request that you propose a total allocation in the proposed FY 2018/19 State Budget of \$20 million to support these two important projects, comprised of \$4 million for Ellwood Mesa Habitat Management Plan and restoration and \$16 million for the Goleta Train Depot property acquisition, design and construction.

Ellwood Mesa Habitat Management Plan and Restoration

In the summer of 2017, the City of Goleta received the results of a tree health assessment performed as part of the Monarch Butterfly Habitat Management Plan preparation process. The results revealed the presence of more than 1,000 standing dead and dying eucalyptus trees (over 20% of the population of the grove) on Ellwood Mesa. Many of these trees were severely impacted by the drought, which increased their vulnerability to the invasion of pests.

The City Council discussed options to address habitat impacts and public safety risks resulting from the presence of dead and dying trees during two public meetings in September 2017. After a great deal of public comment and City Council deliberation, the Council approved a plan to remove a small number of hazardous trees (approximately 30) along key public trails, while the Monarch Butterfly Habitat Management Plan is being completed. Most trails in the grove have been closed to the public, and the situation continues to be monitored while staff and consultant work on the Plan.

The initial the tree removal costs about \$500/tree. City staff is seeking

Disaster Assistance for Tree Mortality funds for the trees already removed. However, the City does not currently have any funds identified for addressing the remaining 1,000+ trees.

The City Council has asked staff to expedite the management plan process, which typically takes 3-5 years, including California Coastal Act permitting and environmental review. The existing draft outline has been revisited and is being revised to include management and restoration actions related to changing conditions on Ellwood Mesa. Specifically, continuing severe drought and the extensive presence of dead trees create unique resource management challenges that will need to be addressed by the Plan.

Public safety has become a key priority and factor that must be considered and accommodated. As sustainable management of the butterfly habitat is the paramount objective of the Butterfly Habitat Management Plan, it is possible that public access to the groves may be curtailed, if safety concerns conflict with conservation objectives. Because the Ellwood Mesa butterfly groves are a popular recreational resource, the City expects that the potential for limiting public access to these areas will generate significant public participation and/or controversy, resulting in added costs in plan development and permitting.

Funding was set aside in the FY 2017/18 and FY 2018/19 budgets for the Habitat Management Plan. However, the amount of funding will not be adequate to support a robust, expedited process using outside consultants.

The Ellwood Mesa is the heart of Goleta for many people in our community, and symbolizes the commitment the City has made to protect and restore critical coastal open space. The monarch butterfly holds a special place in the hearts of many Goleta residents, and is part of our City's identity, as it appears on our logo and was the inspiration for the name of our community newsletter, *The Monarch Press*.

The Ellwood Mesa is also home to many other vulnerable plant and animal species, and is a key nesting site for several different types of raptors. The vast canopy and understory provide critical habitat for these species, while the trees act to counteract the effect of GHG emissions. The City Council is committed to the effort of restoring the Ellwood Mesa and maintaining this valuable resource for the enjoyment of the community, but surmounting the impacts of the continued severe drought in our region poses a significant financial challenge. The City is requesting an allocation of \$4 million for the Ellwood Mesa Habitat Management Plan and restoration. This represents \$50,000 per acre (73.6 acres of eucalyptus) plus plan implementation costs, a coastal permit and public recreational features such as trail markers, benches and signage.

The Goleta Train Depot Project

The City has long desired to promote and accommodate peak-hour regional rail service to reduce impacts on the congested Highway 101 corridor in the south coast region and to serve employment centers in Goleta, UCSB as well as the Santa Barbara Airport. To accommodate this, the City General Plan identified the need for "an intermodal transportation center that would provide a convenient and safe hub for transfers between bus, shuttle, train, automobile, bicycle, and pedestrian modes". The existing Goleta Amtrak Platform is a very basic facility that lacks connectivity to riders' final destinations, has inadequate parking, marginal restroom facilities, inadequate covered waiting areas, no food and refreshments, no bus service, poor bike and pedestrian access, poor lighting, and safety concerns.

In 2016, a property owner (Direct Relief) located immediately adjacent to the existing Amtrak Platform indicated it was selling its property and offered to sell it to the City for \$6.7 million. In November 2017, the City Council approved acquisition of the 109,000-square foot property for purposes of constructing a new multimodal Goleta Tran Depot adjacent to the Amtrak Platform.

The next step for the City is to secure approximately \$16 million in funds for preliminary engineering, environmental review, design, permitting and construction of the new depot. The City has developed a concept plan and is ready to launch into the initial project development phases. The City's vision is for the Goleta Train Depot to be a fully functional rail depot facility with expanded parking for private vehicles, accommodations for bus transit, shuttles, and vanpool connections, a new transit bus turnaround, and enhanced pedestrian and bicycle access. The new depot will include electronic ticketing, restrooms, covered waiting areas, dining amenities, bike storage and bike share, restrooms/changing rooms with showers, and electric charging stations for private vehicles. Such a facility will attract connections to the Metropolitan Transit District, the Santa Barbara Airport, the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB) and corporate business centers and will support the recently approved new Surfliner peak hour train service between Ventura and Goleta. We respectfully request intermodal transit funding in the amount of \$16 million be secured for this specific project. This will allow us to move forward with design and construction of the project without impacting Measure A funds that are needed to fund peak hour rail service and related infrastructure and equipment.

Thank you for your consideration for requesting funding for the region. You've been a critical partner in our efforts in the past and we hope that you can help secure funding for these projects that will benefit the community and the region, now and in the future.



Paula Perotte
Mayor