17

Office of the City Manager

CONSENT CALENDAR
November 17, 2026

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Paul Buddenhagen, City Manager

Submitted by: Jamie Parks, Director, Public Works

Subject: Grant Application: Caltrans Sustainable Communities Grant for the University Avenue Multimodal Corridor Study

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution approving the City's application submitted by the October 9, 2026 deadline for up to $700,000 under the Fiscal Year 2027–28 Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning Grants, Sustainable Communities Competitive category, for the University Avenue Transit Priority and Multimodal Corridor Study; authorizing the City Manager or designee to commit $150,000 in City funding to meet the required local match of a minimum of 11.7% of the total project cost; and, if awarded, accept the grant and execute the grant agreement and related amendments, subject to the approved project budget and applicable City requirements.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

The grant request is $700,000, with a City funding contribution of $150,000, for a total project cost of $850,000. The required City match would be provided through the 51 BRT (bus rapid transit) Council referral (GL Code: 011-54-622-662-0000-000-431-612310), which was approved by the City Council on January 16, 2024 in Ordinance No 7,892-N.S.: an amendment to the Annual Appropriations Ordinance No. 7,879-N.S. for Fiscal Year 2024.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

University Avenue connects the UC Berkeley campus, downtown, neighborhoods, commercial areas, and waterfront. The proposed study would extend approximately three miles from Seawall Drive and the Berkeley waterfront to Oxford Street, Downtown Berkeley, and the UC Berkeley campus, including relevant connecting and parallel streets. It would address transit reliability, safety, accessibility, and competing demands for roadway and curb space while improving connections to regional transportation and community destinations.

University Avenue is identified as a High-Injury Street in Berkeley's Vision Zero Action Plan. Its wide crossings, traffic volumes, turning movements, and interactions among buses, automobiles, pedestrians, bicycles, and freight create safety and accessibility

challenges. Substantial housing development along and near the corridor, recurring transit delays, and planned waterfront transportation investments reinforce the need for a coordinated corridor-wide transportation framework.

Planning for access to the proposed ferry terminal creates an opportunity to evaluate these connections together and identify how transit, walking, and bicycling can provide practical alternatives to automobile travel while maintaining necessary vehicle access. The study would also examine connections to Downtown Berkeley BART, Berkeley Amtrak station and Capitol Corridor service, the Bay Trail, and Berkeley Marina.

The proposed scope would include the following work:

- **Existing conditions and access needs.** Assess transit operations, travel patterns, safety, accessibility, bicycle network gaps, and vehicle and curb access from campus to the waterfront. Document existing and planned improvements and evaluate collision patterns, ridership, traffic delay, sidewalks, curb ramps, crossings, accessible transit boarding areas, parking, loading, freight activity, housing trends, and economic conditions. Examine connections to the proposed ferry terminal and existing transit services.
- **Community engagement.** Develop accessible, multilingual outreach through corridor meetings, transit-stop and neighborhood outreach, surveys, and community partnerships. Prioritize transit-dependent residents, tenants, people with disabilities, seniors, students, merchants, and communities facing transportation barriers. The proposed engagement program includes four workshops or open houses, eight corridor pop-ups, six targeted listening sessions, three walking and rolling audits, four intercept-survey periods, and at least five presentations to advisory or governing bodies. Engagement summaries and participant evaluations would document how public input shapes recommendations and help identify gaps in participation.
- **Multimodal alternatives.** Evaluate transit priority and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) concepts, such as transit lanes, signal priority, and stop access improvements, alongside pedestrian safety, automobile access, and curb management. Consider bicycle connections on Addison Street, Berkeley Way, and/or Hearst Avenue, including connections between those routes, University Avenue, and the waterfront. Alternatives would also address accessibility for people with disabilities, parking and loading, business and freight access, emergency access, and connections across Interstate 80 to the waterfront.
- **Recommendations and implementation planning.** Compare alternatives using safety, accessibility, transit reliability, equity, climate, and feasibility criteria. Prepare a preferred planning framework, conceptual improvements, planning-

level costs, phasing, and potential implementation funding sources for future City consideration.

Public Works would lead the study and coordinate with AC Transit, Caltrans, the Water Emergency Transportation Authority, UC Berkeley, BART, the Alameda County Transportation Commission, and relevant City departments. Partner roles would be documented in the application and scope. The study would address University Avenue and its connections; it would not constitute a complete study of the broader Shattuck corridor.

The University Avenue Transit Priority and Multimodal Corridor Study advances the Strategic Plan goal to create a resilient, safe, connected, and prepared city. It also supports social and racial equity and environmental sustainability by examining transportation barriers and opportunities to improve access without increasing dependence on driving.

BACKGROUND

The September 12, 2023 Council referral, "51B BRT + University/Shattuck Corridor Mobility Improvements," called for feasibility analysis and community engagement on BRT options, interdepartmental and interagency coordination, and consideration of quick-build improvements[1]. It also referred funding proposals for accessibility improvements and corridor studies to future budget processes. The March 25, 2025, City Council Referral Prioritization Results ranked this referral first[2]. The proposed grant would advance its University Avenue component through a defined planning process and dedicated resources.

The City's 1996 University Avenue Strategic Plan established goals for corridor vitality, neighborhood quality, and improved transit, pedestrian, and bicycle circulation[3]. Three decades later, the corridor has experienced substantial housing and commercial development, changing travel patterns, and new transportation and waterfront initiatives. The proposed study would provide an updated transportation framework that accounts for these changes and current housing, accessibility, climate, and equity priorities.

Berkeley's 2023 Transit-First Policy Implementation Plan calls for completing a University Avenue transit corridor plan by the end of 2029. The proposed study would also build on the General Plan Transportation Element, Bicycle Plan, Pedestrian Plan, Vision Zero Action Plan, Housing Element, and Corridors Zoning Update, while supporting regional transit-priority and transit-oriented development policies.

---

[1] https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2023-09-12%20Item%2029%2051B%20BRT%20%2B%20University-Shattuck.pdf

[2] https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2025-03-25%20Special%20Item%2003%202025%20City%20Council%20Referral%20Prioritization%20Results.pdf

Previous investments include transit signal priority, bus-stop and pedestrian improvements, parallel bicycle facilities, and Bay Trail access. The University West Bus Stops and Safety Project is upgrading stops at Acton and Bonar Streets, and additional bus-stop improvements are funded at Shattuck Avenue, Martin Luther King Jr. Way, and Sacramento Street. The study would coordinate these investments and identify remaining corridor-wide needs and right-of-way tradeoffs.

The California Department of Transportation administers the Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant Program to support local and regional planning that improves transportation access, safety, and connectivity while advancing California's climate and equity goals[3]. Funded projects are expected to benefit the multimodal transportation system while supporting public health, social equity, and environmental justice.

The grant application deadline was October 9, 2026, before this item could be brought to Council for consideration. To preserve the City's opportunity to compete for funding, staff submitted the application pending Council approval of the application and required local match. If Council does not approve these commitments, staff would withdraw the application.

The proposed University Avenue Transit Priority and Multimodal Corridor Study would examine how transit priority, bicycle and pedestrian connections, and coordinated waterfront access could improve travel options between the UC Berkeley campus and the Bay. Community engagement would help identify barriers experienced by corridor residents and users, particularly people who depend on transit or face challenges accessing employment, education, services, and recreation. Evaluating access to the proposed ferry terminal as part of the broader corridor study would also allow the City to consider how a future transportation investment could connect effectively with existing neighborhoods and travel networks.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

The study would evaluate opportunities to improve transit reliability and make walking, bicycling, and transit more practical for corridor and waterfront trips. These strategies could reduce vehicle miles traveled and transportation emissions if implemented. The proposed planning effort would not fund construction, final engineering, or project-level environmental documents. Future physical improvements would be subject to applicable environmental review, funding, and City approvals.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

A City-led application advances an established Council priority. Combining transit priority, bicycle and pedestrian connectivity, and waterfront access in one study would allow the City and community to evaluate tradeoffs and develop coordinated recommendations.

---

[3] https://dot.ca.gov/programs/transportation-planning/division-of-transportation-planning/regional-and-community-planning/sustainable-transportation-planning-grants

The Sustainable Communities Competitive category is appropriate for a City-led multimodal planning effort. Providing the local match through staff time would support project oversight, community engagement, and technical coordination while using existing personnel resources. Approval would allow the City to proceed with the submitted application and authorize the local match necessary to receive funding if awarded.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

The City Council could decline to approve the application and required local match and direct staff to withdraw the City's grant application. This would eliminate the proposed local staff-time match commitment but eliminate the opportunity to secure up to $700,000 for the study. Advancing the University Avenue corridor planning effort would then require another funding source or a reduced scope, potentially delaying progress on this Council priority. Without a funded corridor-wide study, the City would continue to rely on individual projects to address transportation needs, limiting its ability to coordinate transit priority, safety, accessibility, and future growth across the corridor.

CONTACT PERSON

Jamie Parks, Director, Public Works, (510)-981-6300

Attachments:
1: Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

APPROVING A CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION GRANT APPLICATION AND AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER OR DESIGNEE TO ACCEPT GRANT FUNDS AND EXECUTE A GRANT AGREEMENT AND AMENDMENTS FOR THE UNIVERSITY AVENUE TRANSIT PRIORITY AND MULTIMODAL CORRIDOR STUDY

WHEREAS, the City of Berkeley seeks funding through the Fiscal Year 2027–28 California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Sustainable Transportation Planning Grants, Sustainable Communities Competitive category, for the University Avenue Transit Priority and Multimodal Corridor Study; and

WHEREAS, the study would evaluate community-informed options for transit priority, bicycle and pedestrian connectivity, accessibility, automobile and business access, and connections to regional transit and the proposed ferry terminal; and

WHEREAS, the study would advance the University Avenue component of the September 12, 2023 Council referral on BRT and corridor mobility improvements, ranked first in the 2025 referral prioritization results; and

WHEREAS, the City intends to satisfy the required local match through $90,693 in eligible City staff time, classified by Caltrans as cash match, and must execute a Restricted Grant Agreement before receiving reimbursement.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that the Council approves the City's application to Caltrans for up to $700,000 for the University Avenue Transit Priority and Multimodal Corridor Study.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council commits $150,000 in eligible City funding, representing the 11.47% minimum match requirement bringing the total project budget to $850,000, to meet the required local match.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, if awarded, the City Manager or designee is authorized to accept the grant and execute the Grant Agreement, related documents, and amendments with the California Department of Transportation for this project, subject to the approved project budget and applicable City requirements.