



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Agenda Number:

Submitted on:
(COB Stamp)

Department Name: County Executive Office
Department No.: 012
Agenda Date: March 10, 2026
Placement: Administrative Agenda
Estimated Time:
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Department Director: Mona Miyasato, County Executive Officer
Contact: Clare Tobin, Legislative Analyst
SUBJECT: 2026 Critical Projects for Legislative Funding

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence:

As to form: N/A

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Approve the 2026 Critical Projects for Legislative Funding list as the County's priorities for state and federal funding opportunities;
- b) Authorize County staff and legislative advocates to choose which projects from the list to submit for state and federal funding opportunities based on the specific criteria for each funding opportunity; and
- c) Determine that the above actions are organizational and administrative activities of government that are not projects under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15378(b)(5) of the CEQA Guidelines.

Summary Text:

The purpose of this item is to request approval of the 2026 Critical Projects for Legislative Funding list for consideration as the County's priorities. The list will be used by County staff and legislative advocates to select projects for submission to state and federal funding opportunities, based on the criteria for each funding opportunity, targeting projects that will qualify and have the best chance of

success. The list also facilitates the County's ability to respond to opportunities with quick turnaround times.

Discussion:

At the March 2, 2026 Legislative Program Committee (LPC) meeting, the committee approved the draft list of 2026 Critical Projects for Legislative Funding (Attachment A), which must also be approved by the Board of Supervisors. The list allows staff and the County's legislative advocates to be responsive to state and federal funding opportunities with timely submissions. When opportunities are announced, staff and advocates choose projects from the list to submit based on the specific selection criteria for that opportunity.

Many important projects in the County are not implemented due to lack of available funding. The LPC annually compiles, reviews, and approves a list of countywide projects and identifies them as unfunded or underfunded critical projects. Critical projects are generally shovel-ready capital projects that align with the Legislative Platform and are strong candidates for legislative funding. Funding opportunities include member requests at the state level, federal earmarks (such as Congressionally Directed Spending and Community Project Funding), grants, and others. The list is subsequently reviewed and approved by the Board of Supervisors.

Once the list is approved by the Board, the County's legislative representatives and advocates seek funding opportunities at the state and federal levels. The critical projects list is extensive; as funding opportunities arise, the County's legislative advocates work closely with staff to identify projects from the list or from the Legislative Platform for submittal. Typically, only a limited number of projects are submitted to prioritize those that are most appropriate and most likely to succeed. The legislative advocates review the projects regarding funding criteria, viability, and likely success of being selected. There are constraints and certain factors that limit the eligibility of projects. These factors include project scope and size, cost estimate, priorities of the local delegation, and community support, among others.

Background:

One key funding opportunity is federal earmarks. Each year, the United States Congress considers and enacts annual appropriations bills, providing funding to the federal government. There are twelve bills that emerge from the appropriations process, covering issues from transportation to health and human services. Members of Congress make requests for specific projects through Community Project Funding (in the House) or Congressionally Directed Spending (in the Senate); approved requests become earmarks in the various federal appropriations bills. Staff expect Congress to continue to earmark funds in 2026 for a limited number of projects in the FY 2026-27 appropriations bills. There is typically a quick turnaround from when project criteria are announced to the submission deadline. The 2026 Critical Projects for Legislative Funding list facilitates the County's participation.

Staff also submit projects from the list to members of the state delegation for legislative funding. Other opportunities include grants, such as through major federal programs like the Water Resources Development Act.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

The amount of funding for a project varies based on each funding opportunity. For federal Community Project Funding and Congressionally Directed Spending, award amounts for each funded project are usually \$750,000 to \$1 million, sometimes up to \$2 million. The County has historically received one or two awards per year.

Attachments:

Attachment A – 2026 Critical Projects for State and Federal Funding

Contact Information:

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