

2026 Critical Projects for Legislative Funding

Many critical projects in the County are not implemented due to lack of available funding. To support these projects, the County's legislative representatives and advocates seek funding opportunities at the state and federal levels. The Legislative Program Committee annually compiles, reviews, and approves a list of countywide projects and identifies them as unfunded or underfunded critical projects. The list is subsequently reviewed and approved by the Board of Supervisors.

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 critical projects list is extensive; as funding opportunities arise, the County's 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.

Projects Carried Over from 2025

1. Countywide Building Energy Management Systems (BEMS) Upgrades - \$2M

This is an ongoing countywide energy initiative project that allows for greater control and visibility of a building's energy usage and will allow for greater programming to increase or decrease energy usage depending on time-of-day demand. By having the ability to visualize energy usage in real time and to control HVAC settings, lights and other high energy systems within a facility will give the County the ability to save energy and money.

2. Orcutt Community Center - \$33.5M

The proposed Orcutt Community Center will bring together the long-standing Orcutt Area Seniors in Service (OASIS) programming and the Orcutt Branch Library into a shared, expanded facility designed to serve residents of all ages throughout the Santa Maria Valley. The center will offer increased library services, vital working areas, and flexible space for community residents. Founded in the 1960s and incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in 1985, OASIS has grown from a small group of service-minded retirees into a vital provider of programs that support older adults' physical, mental, social, and intellectual well-being. As demand for both senior services and library resources continues to increase, a permanent, appropriately sized community-centered facility is essential. The new center will be located on a County-owned parcel and will reflect a strong public-private partnership in which Santa Barbara County acquires and retains ownership of the property while collaborating with nonprofit and community partners to develop and operate the facility. Preliminary site planning has been completed, environmental review and design are underway; however, construction funding is still needed. The total project cost will cover site improvements and construction and may be phased.

3. Access to Oral Health Using Mobile Dental Vehicle - \$1.3M

Access to dental care is a challenge and many of the underserved population served by community health centers in Santa Barbara County cannot afford seeing a dentist. The project proposes adding a three chair Mobile Dental Vehicle (MDV) to PHD clinical operations. The MDV is mobile and travel between the five clinics serving all districts, i.e. Carpinteria, Franklin, Santa Barbara, Lompoc, and Santa Maria. In addition, it can travel to other areas of need such as Guadalupe and Cuyama. The MDV can be parked in schools parking lots, churches or community centers where people can access services. Due to their high mobility, MDVs are particularly valuable for the underserved populations living in rural areas. The advance of dental devices enables MDVs to be operated in a self-sufficient manner. Adding an MDV by the department will bring oral health services to where people need it the most across Santa Barbara County, in the field, at schools and community centers especially in rural areas of the County. This project will cover all districts.

4. Physical Access Control System Upgrade - \$4.3M

This upgrade includes new door hardware, controls, and badge access engineered with encryption to replace antiquated security hardware at external/sensitive points of entry throughout the County. The existing County electronic access control platform was introduced prior to 2004. Currently, parts of the system and components have reached end-of-support and show wear and tear. This may lead to outages or failures, and antiquated card readers and control panels are not engineered with encryption to safeguard against employee access card duplication. In addition, control panels are not equipped with memory to allow system continuity during an outage. Data has to be re-loaded to the panels after a disconnect. Large transmissions of data could take an extensive period of time leading to business disruptions. The County currently supports 908 doors across 101 locations countywide and the infrastructure continues to expand. A complete physical system upgrade would also enable future interoperability between access control, and video surveillance, and provide a foundation for centralized alarm monitoring.

5. Mission Canyon Safety Realignment - \$600,000

Mission Canyon Road was built decades ago before modern geometric standards existed. As a result, it needs to be realigned to reduce roadway departures and improve pedestrian and bicycle circulation in this area. This project would also complete a part of the County (and City of Santa Barbara) adopted "Safe Passage" plan for this corridor.

6. Lower Mission Creek Flood Control Project - \$50M

This project is located along Mission Creek from Canon Perdido St. to Cabrillo Blvd. in the City of Santa Barbara. The Lower Mission Creek project will widen the channel in order to improve capacity. Completion of this project will reduce flooding and property damage adjacent to lower Mission Creek during large storm events. The Lower Mission Creek Flood Control Project is a federal US Army Corps of Engineers project that has been under study and development since the 1960s. The City of Santa Barbara and the County Flood Control District worked with the community in the 1990s to develop the current project that addresses the flood control concerns and the environmental issues. The Corps has not obtained adequate funding to complete design and construction and the City and County have been working on finding opportunities to construct smaller reaches of the project as funding options arise. The estimated cost is to complete design, right of way, permitting, and to construct this project.

7. Paving Farm to Market Corridors - \$4.7M

Award of funding would help rehabilitate and increase safety of a key roadway serving the largest source of jobs in the County of Santa Barbara. For the communities adjacent to Betteravia Road,

agriculture and farming provide one out of every four jobs in the region. Federal objectives to serve and support economically disadvantaged populations will be met with an award of funding to rehabilitate this transportation route.

8. Vandenberg Village Park - \$3.6M

Vandenberg Village is located just outside of Vandenberg Space Force Base and north of the City of Lompoc in Santa Barbara County (4th Supervisorial District). Currently, Vandenberg Village faces a significant challenge due to the extreme shortage of public areas for recreational activities and community gatherings. In response to this need, residents took proactive steps in 2012 by donating undeveloped land to the County of Santa Barbara. This marked the inception of a community-driven initiative to establish Vandenberg Village Park, a space dedicated to walking, play, education, environmental awareness, and the fostering of community. Vandenberg Village Park is designed to be an inclusive "walk to park" recreational space, encompassing both active and passive areas. The park is comprised of two tot lots, a basketball court, skateboard amenities, benches, picnic areas, a gazebo/pavilion, restroom, walking paths and trails, interpretive panels, and Burton Mesa chaparral mitigation and protection. The project can be completed in the following phases, given funding availability: Phase 1 (\$3M): installation of interactive play areas including two tot lots, a basketball court, skateboard amenities, a gazebo/pavilion, picnic areas, lawn and native landscape areas, and a small parking lot for inclusive park access; and Phase 2 (\$600K): restroom facility.

9. Cachuma Lake Water Treatment Plant Relocation - \$8M

This project constructs a shovel-ready replacement of an outdated water treatment plant at Cachuma Lake and relocates the facility above water intrusion levels. The existing water treatment facility is located in area that is subject to building flooding during periods of high-water levels and high wind events. The water level at Cachuma Lake is scheduled to be raised as a result of a biological opinion issued by the National Marine Fisheries Service in order to allow for a larger quantity of cooler water to be released into the Santa Ynez River for protection of endangered Steelhead Trout. However, this surcharge level cannot be raised until the water treatment facility is relocated to a higher elevation. The facility relocation and ensuing allowable water level raise will concurrently provide an increase in water storage capacity and improved water quality. Water from the lake is also diverted into the Tecolote Tunnel, which supplies drinking water to the City of Santa Barbara and the Goleta, Carpinteria, and Montecito Water Districts.

Proposed New Projects for 2026

11. Santa Ynez Valley Community Aquatics Complex - \$8.7M

The Santa Ynez Valley Community Aquatics Complex is a two-pool outdoor facility designed to serve youth athletics, public safety training, recreation, and community health needs across the Santa Ynez Valley and Los Alamos. Today, the region has no consistent, year-round public access to aquatics programming - including swim lessons, lap swim, and water safety education - creating a critical gap for families, students, and public safety partners. Located on the Santa Ynez Valley High School campus, the project includes a 33-meter competition pool, a 25-yard warm-water recreation pool, ADA-accessible amenities, and spectator seating. The facility will support swim lessons, a valley-wide third grade learn-to-swim program, and year-round public programming along with high school athletics and regional competitions. This project is a strong example of public/private regional collaboration, bringing together the Cities of Solvang and Buellton, Santa Barbara County, and the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, alongside the school district and community partners, to deliver a shared public resource that benefits all valley residents (see letters of support). Currently in the pre-construction phase, the project has secured initial design approvals and raised \$5M.

Construction is anticipated to begin in 2027 upon funding of the remaining amount, with completion estimated within 18 months.

12. Lompoc Community Plaza - \$2.8M

The Lompoc Community Plaza is located adjacent to the Historic Lompoc Theatre on Highway One, at the center of the City of Lompoc. It will turn a 21,000 square foot symbol of urban blight into a vibrant, welcoming, and true reflection of the community. Included in this project will be: 1) an open public plaza for community events and gatherings such as farmers markets, the Lompoc Chalks festival, Food Truck Fridays, arts and crafts fairs, music festivals, flash mobs, and family events; 2) park-like landscaping, with benches and sitting areas; 3) a commercial BBQ that will resurrect the Lompoc tradition of Saturday tri-tip dinners open to the public; 4) 15 James Wolfe sculptures in 3 sculpture gardens along the perimeter of the plaza, adding to Lompoc's Mural Walk as a must-see public art installation; and 5) new public restrooms and drinking fountains. This project will resurrect Old Town Lompoc and the Pacific Coast Highway not only visually and economically, but it will renew the sense of community for residents as well.

13. Hollister Avenue/State Street Improvement Project - \$9M

This project will enhance approximately 1.25 miles of roadway from State Highway 154 west to San Antonio Road. The total cost of the full Hollister Avenue/State Street Improvements program is currently estimated at approximately \$50-\$70M and will be implemented in multiple stages. This request for Phase I funding includes replacing the existing concrete box culvert that conveys Atascadero Creek beneath Hollister Avenue to accommodate planned roadway widening and operational improvements along the Hollister Avenue/State Street corridor. The work extends from Auhay Drive to Nogal Drive. The overall corridor improvements are intended to improve traffic circulation, safety, and multimodal connectivity. Phase I is currently unfunded.

14. Tuckers Grove Stream Crossing and Fish Passage Improvement Project - \$4M

The project aims to restore fish passage and improve critical habitat for the endangered Southern California steelhead by removing the existing low water crossing, constructing a new bridge across San Antonio Creek, and restoring the riparian corridor located in Tuckers Grove County Park in Santa Barbara County. San Antonio Creek is designated as critical habitat for steelhead, which have been periodically observed in low numbers over the past decade. The improvements will remove the current aquatic organism passage barrier to open upstream habitat that is suitable for steelhead spawning. The enhancement will also restore natural stream function and sediment transport, improve water quality, and enhance habitat for other species along San Antonio Creek, as well as minimize erosion along the creek banks.

15. Goleta Beach Pier Improvements - \$2M

Goleta Beach Pier is a 1400-foot-long timber structure built in the 1970s and is one of the only public piers open 24 hours per day, 7 days per week at no cost to the pedestrian public. The pier is lit with low-level lighting to accommodate the nighttime use of the pier. Fishing licenses are not required for pier fishing, providing low-cost fishing opportunities. The Goleta Beach Pier boat launch facility is the only one along the 40 miles of coastline between Santa Barbara Harbor and Gaviota Pier. Boats are launched via a vertical hoist and is used by both the public and University of California Santa Barbara's Oceanography Department, as it provides an easy access point to the ocean environment. Other pier amenities include a bait shop shed and two widened sections for benches. The pier sustained over \$1.5M in damages during the 2023 storm event. While a portion will be reimbursed by County insurance, additional funding is needed for pier improvements and upgrades for future storm resiliency, as well as affordable sustenance and recreation.

16. County Air Support Hangar Project - \$5M

The joint Sheriff and Fire County Air Support Unit (ASU), based out of the Santa Ynez Airport, is comprised of 5 helicopters and a fixed-wing aircraft. 4 of the 5 helicopters are a 2-bladed system while the newer Firehawk is a 4-bladed system. The unit has outgrown the current hangar and office space, while having no “living quarters” for Fire and Sheriff personnel during 24-hour operations. Additional hangar space is needed to protect the County’s valuable investments in the aircraft from unnecessary exposure to the elements, security from potential tampering at an open-to-public airport, and future replacement aircraft that will require more hangar space. Current aging aircraft are 2-bladed systems and can be stored closely together, whereas newer applicable aircraft are typically 4-bladed systems – requiring more floor space around the aircraft. Currently, there are no available hangars to purchase or lease that would meet the overall unit needs; therefore a new hangar would need to be constructed. The addition of a new hangar, with allocated living quarters, would allow for the ability for a 24-hour schedule which would reduce callbacks of flight crews from as long as 60 minutes to 10 minutes, benefiting the community with quicker response times during emergencies.

17. Santa Maria Area Transit Bus Depot at the Northern Branch Jail - \$250,000

Part of the operational plan for the Northern Branch Jail (NBJ) included providing a bus stop for the Santa Maria Regional Transit (SMRT). It was planned that these buses could pull up in front of the custody facility and provide transportation to newly released incarcerated people as well as visitors. Before the NBJ was opened, SMRT administrators were invited to the jail to evaluate the location and pick up/drop off scenario. By using an actual bus, it was discovered that the SMRT buses that would pick up in this area were too long in length to be able to negotiate the turn at the front of the facility. SMRT officials stated that a bus stop would need to be provided along Black Road in order for transportation services to be provided.

18. Oversized Vehicle Storage Project - \$1.3M

The Sheriff’s Office currently possesses a multi-use mobile command post (MCP), a specialized, self-sustaining trailer that serves as an on-site hub for incident command, providing advanced communication, video monitoring, and tactical coordination. This unit improves response times during critical incidents, natural disasters, and large public events by bringing command functions directly to the field. In addition to this mobile command post, the Sheriff’s Office entered into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the California Office of Emergency Services (CAL-OES) and took possession of an even larger MCP that can be deployed during similar incidents throughout Santa Barbara County and the CAL-OES Region 1A. In addition to these oversized vehicles, the Sheriff’s Office recently took possession of a SAFE Boat, which is a high-performance aluminum vessel specialized for law enforcement, coast security, and search and rescue, with many additional features to assist in public safety for our citizens. These oversized vehicles and boat are worth millions of dollars and need a garage built to house them so we can protect the significant financial investments from environmental damage, theft, and accelerated wear and tear. Indoor or covered storage will also preserve the resale value of these assets, ensure security, and help to comply with the MOU with CAL-OES as to necessary housing.

19. Northern Branch Jail Construction - \$42M

This project involves construction at the Northern Branch Jail to facilitate the closure of the main portion of the Main Jail in Santa Barbara and help address provisions in the Stipulated Judgement in the *Murray et al. v. County* class action litigation regarding conditions of confinement. The project has a total estimated cost of \$171.2M. The project is to be delivered using a competitive

design-build procurement process. This is a two-step procurement process that combines design and construction services into one contract. The project team is currently administering the second step of procurement, which involves the selection of the design-build entity. The expansion project is anticipated to be complete in 2029.

20. Bridgehouse Utility Extensions - \$800,000

The purpose of the Bridge House Utility Extensions Phase 2 project is to update domestic water and wastewater (sanitary sewer) services for the Bridge House Homeless Shelter, at a total cost of \$7.72M. The facilities are currently on domestic well and septic systems, both of which are failing and have required an elevated level of service over time, and also limiting the potential expansion of the shelter complex needed to serve people experiencing homelessness. This project will support future expansion of the facility by increasing the existing well, septic systems, and the ability to process the sewer waste onsite. This project is currently in the evaluation and design phase.

21. Emergency Communication Transmission Tower - \$30,000

The area of Cuyama Valley, Ventucopa, and the Highway 166 corridor is a communications desert. Emergency alerts from the County often do not reach residents due to lack of communications infrastructure and constant outages. Additionally, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Emergency Radio System, which is operated by NOAA and the National Weather Service (NWS), does not cover this specific area of the County. NWS has not been able to obtain funding to expand their network. The estimated cost is for the tower equipment and installation. The County requests that a transmission tower be funded directly to NOAA/NWS. If that is not possible, the County could partner with a state entity or even operate the new transmission tower directly.

22. Los Olivos Wastewater Treatment - \$1.5M

The area of Los Olivos lacks a sewer system. The Los Olivos Community Services District (LOCSO) is seeking funding to create a plan for collection and conveyance of wastewater, from the existing septic system to a city treatment facility. Once implemented, LOCSO will collect wastewater from 384 parcels, the entire district, and convey it approximately 3.5 miles to the nearest connection point with the City of Solvang. The City of Solvang will treat and dispose of the wastewater at its regional treatment facility.

23. Lompoc Valley Agricultural Processing Hub - \$16M

The proposed Lompoc Valley Agricultural Processing Hub would establish a regional, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)-inspected livestock facility to address the shortage of processing capacity on the Central Coast. The facility would enhance supply chain stability, reduce transportation impacts, and provide critical infrastructure to sustain Santa Barbara County's agricultural heritage while advancing economic development in the Lompoc Valley. Currently, many Santa Barbara County livestock producers must transport animals long distances for processing, increasing costs, animal stress, and greenhouse gas emissions while limiting the viability of small and mid-scale ranching operations. This project would create a modern processing hub capable of serving local cattle, sheep, and swine producers; strengthen regional food system resilience; support local agriculture and ranching economies; create skilled jobs and workforce development opportunities; and improve access to locally raised meat for schools, institutions, and consumers. Final costs will depend on site selection within or adjacent to the Lompoc Federal Prison complex, facility retrofit needs, equipment procurement, cold storage capacity, wastewater and utility upgrades, and workforce training components.

24. Fire Station 10 – Western Goleta - \$15 M

The need for Fire Station 10 has been identified for several decades. Fire Station 10 will serve the Western Goleta area (both City and County) and the Highway 101 corridor, one of the most densely populated and highly traveled areas in Santa Barbara County. The station is planned through a formal partnership between the Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District and the City of Goleta, reflecting a strong model of intergovernmental collaboration. Continued residential growth, commercial development, tourism, and traffic congestion have increased demand for emergency response services in the area. Investment in Station 10 ensures rapid fire and EMS response, strengthens wildfire readiness in the wildland-urban interface, and preserves system reliability for surrounding communities. Legislative funding would build upon this successful County–City partnership and enhance public safety along a critical regional transportation corridor.

25. Fire Station 25 – Orcutt - \$18.5

Fire Station 25 is a necessary project to address the increasing call volume and coverage gaps in the expanding unincorporated Orcutt area of the Santa Maria Valley. Growing residential and commercial development, longer travel distances from current stations, and higher unit utilization rates have led to increased response times in North County. Without Station 25, the system remains under strain, especially during multiple incidents, large vegetation fires, or peak medical demand. A new three-bay station in this area has been identified as essential to improve response times and alleviate stress on existing resources. Station 25 will enhance structural fire protection, advanced life-support medical response, and wildland fire capabilities in North County. Legislative funding will fast-track construction, improve safety outcomes, and ensure equitable fire protection services for residents in one of the County’s fastest growing and most underserved communities.