



DATE: April 23, 2020

TO: Transportation Authority of Marin Board of Commissioners

FROM: Anne Richman, Executive Director *Anne Richman*
David Chan, Programming and Legislation Manager
Scott McDonald, Senior Transportation Planner

SUBJECT: Approve Novato's Priority Conservation Area (PCA) Project Changes (Action), Agenda Item No. 6g

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the cancellation of the Carmel Open Space Project and reprogram \$103,950 in Novato's local funds from the Carmel Open Space Project to the Hill Recreational Area Project under TAM's Priority Conservation Area (PCA) Program.

BACKGROUND

Under the One Bay Area Grant (OBAG) Cycle 2 Program, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) included the Priority Conservation Areas (PCA) Program to support Plan Bay Area goals such as preservation and enhancing the natural, economic and social value of rural lands. MTC set aside \$8.2 million for the four North Bay Counties with each County receiving \$2.05 million for programming. PCA funds are federal Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds and must comply with all federal requirements, even in cases when funds are subsequently exchanged for local funds.

On February 23, 2017, the TAM Board programmed \$2.05 million in PCA funds to six projects shown in the below table, including Novato's Carmel Open Space Project and Hill Recreational Area Project.

Funding Exchange

TAM originally programmed \$103,950 in PCA funds to the Carmel Open Space Project. However, the PCA funds were subsequently exchanged with the same amount of local funds from an existing rehabilitation project (called Measure A Group 10 Pavement Rehabilitation) since PCA funds cannot be used for land acquisition projects per federal guidelines. MTC allowed sponsors to exchange PCA funds with eligible non-federal funds consistent with its fund exchange policy (MTC Resolution No. 3331).

Carmel Open Space

The Carmel Open Space is a natural habitat located between Novato's Northwest Quadrant and Carmel Neighborhood. There are three parcels of land that comprise the Carmel Open Space PCA, two of which are owned by Novato and will be retained as undeveloped open space. The third parcel is privately owned and is zoned for residential development. Novato initially applied for PCA Program funds to acquire this additional privately owned parcel with the intent of keeping it a natural open space.

Hill Recreation Area Project

The Hill Recreation Area Project is being developed to preserve and enhance an existing park to increase recreational opportunities and create an urban green space. The specific improvements being delivered from the PCA funding include adding a network of bicycle and pedestrian walkways and multi-purpose pathways, related storm water biofiltration mitigating impervious surfaces created, and installing amenities including lighting and benches. In addition, the improvements will include the retrofit of existing site features to ensure ADA access throughout the bike and pedestrian network created.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

On May 13, 2019, the Novato City Council passed a motion to not proceed with the acquisition of Carmel Hill property and directed City staff to reallocate the \$103,950 in local funds from the PCA exchange to the construction of the Hill Recreation Area Project. The Novato City Council decided not to acquire the Carmel Hill property primarily for the following reasons:

- The City’s hillside & ridgeline protection ordinance already protects the vast majority of the site from development, effectively preserving Carmel area as open space, and
- The cost of the parcel exceeded the local funds available to match the PCA Grant.

After consulting with MTC and TAM staff, Novato staff initiated steps to cancel the Carmel Open Space Project and move the local funds subject to PCA requirements to another PCA-eligible project.

The Hill Recreation Area Project can absorb the additional funds from the Carmel Open Space Project by revising the scope to convert the asphalt paths around the project to more expensive concrete walkways. Concrete walkways are favored because they are more accessible, easier to maintain, and more durable than asphalt. The Hill Recreation Area Project is scheduled for completion late 2020.

While TAM does not typically take action on an agency’s local funds, these local funds were exchanged with PCA funds. The local funds are still subject to requirements imposed by MTC as a condition for authorizing the funding exchange, including the requirement for the TAM Board to approve moving the local funds from the Carmel Open Space Project to the Hill Recreation Area Project.

The below table summarizes the reprogramming changes for TAM’s PCA Program upon approval from the TAM Board:

PCA Reprogramming			
Sponsor	Project	Original Programmed Amount	Revised Programmed Amount
National Parks Service	Fort Baker's Vista Point Trail	\$500,000	\$500,000
Corte Madera	Paradise Drive Multiuse Pathway	\$312,000	\$312,000
Marin County	Wilson Road Rehabilitation Project	\$500,000	\$500,000
Marin County	Hicks Valley Road Rehabilitation Project	\$369,700	\$369,700
Novato	Carmel Open Space Land Acquisition	\$103,950	\$0
Novato	Hill Recreation Area Project	\$264,350	\$368,300
Total		\$2,050,000	\$2,050,000

FISCAL IMPACTS

There are no direct fiscal impacts to TAM's annual budget with approving this item.

NEXT STEPS

Upon TAM Board's approval, staff will communicate TAM's approval with MTC to remove the Carmel Open Space Project from TAM's PCA Program and increase the Hill Recreation Area Project by \$103,950 in local funds.

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