

City of Fort Worth, Texas

Mayor and Council Communication

DATE: 06/25/24 M&C FILE NUMBER: M&C 24-0573

LOG NAME: 20US DOT SMART WEATHERIZATION GRANT

SUBJECT

(CD 10) Ratify Application for Federal Funds and Authorize Execution of the Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation Grant from the United States Department of Transportation in the Amount of \$2,000,000.00 for the Development of an Approach for Providing Near Real-Time Air and Road Weather Analysis and Short-Range Forecasts for Autonomous Operations and Adopt Appropriation Ordinance

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Ratify the application for Federal funds and authorize execution of the Federal Grant Agreement with the United States Department of Transportation for the Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation Grant Program US DOT SMART Weatherization Grant in the amount of \$2,000,000.00; and
2. Adopt the attached appropriation ordinance increasing estimated receipts and appropriations in the Grants Operating Federal Fund, subject to the receipt of the grant, in an amount up to \$2,000,000.00 for the purposes of funding the US DOT SMART Weatherization Grant project.

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of this Mayor and Council Communication (M&C) is to ratify the application for and authorize acceptance of the United States Department Of Transportation (US DOT) SMART Grant. The agreement details the responsibilities of both the City and the US DOT in the development of the Smart Grant Project. This M&C also adopts an appropriation ordinance to accept federal grant funds for the project.

In September, 2023, the City/TPW Department applied for the Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) Grant through US DOT; and the US DOT awarded the \$2,000,000.00 grant in March 2024. The SMART Grant is part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill and was awarded to 34 agencies around the country (Fort Worth was the only City in Texas awarded) for projects that advance smart infrastructure and improve transportation efficiency and safety. The initial phase of this grant is for a feasibility analysis and limited testing of weather sensors in City and TxDOT right-of-way for autonomous vehicles. It will not result in actual construction and should not affect the transportation system's level of service.

This project aims to improve weather data by deploying a comprehensive weather network and associated services to support safe and efficient intermodal operations, particularly in the Autonomous Vehicle (AV) and Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) industries. The objective is to demonstrate how a network of low-altitude, and surface weather sensors can be integrated into micro-weather models, providing a refined and consistent picture of air and road conditions for efficient intermodal routing decisions. This integrated approach will alleviate conflicts between different weather data sources, ensuring safer, more reliable, and cost-effective decisions during hazardous weather conditions.

This grant is being pursued in the aftermath of the 2021 weather-related 133 car chain-reaction crash on Interstate Highway (IH) 35W which resulted in several fatalities. While drivers can be alerted by signs and the emergency broadcast system, autonomous vehicles require an alert system that is not currently available. The City of Fort Worth is aiming to partner with the North Texas Council of Governments and TruWeather Solutions and start the initial research and testing of weather sensing technology in the area autonomous freight is currently operating in Council District 10. The exact location and placement of the sensors will be determined by the study.

Appropriations for the Grants Operating Federal Fund are depicted below:

Fund	Amount
21001-Grants Operating Federal	\$2,000,000.00

Funding will be budgeted in the Grants Operating Federal fund, subject to the receipt of the grant, for the purposes of funding the US DOT SMART Weatherization Grant project. Since City salaries will be charged, indirect cost recovery does apply.

Funding for this project was not included in the Fiscal Year budget because the project and funding sources were not known at the time of the budget development.

Transportation and Public Works staff are initiating the procurement of contractor services to complete the Smart Grant Project. The Smart Grant Project is expected to begin in the summer of 2024 and be completed by February 2026. There is a possibility for additional funding for the expansion of the weatherization sensor deployment if the testing proves beneficial for the City.

A Form 1295 is not required because: This contract will be with a governmental entity, state agency or public institution of higher education: US Department of Transportation

The Director of Finance certifies that upon approval of the above recommendations and adoption of the attached appropriation ordinance, funds will be available in the current operating budget as appropriated, in the Grants Operating Federal Fund. The Transportation and Public Works Department (and Financial Management Services) will be responsible for the collection and deposit of funds due to the City. Prior to an expenditure being incurred, the Transportation and Public Works Department has the responsibility to validate the availability of funds. This is a reimbursement grant.

Additional Information Contact:

Monty Hall	8662
Kelly Porter	7259