THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

Staff Report

Council Meeting Date: February 14, 2023

Subject: I-26 Connector Project City Betterments and Aesthetic Treatments

Staff Resource(s): Ken Putnam, PE, Transportation Department Director

Action Requested: Adoption of a resolution authorizing the City Manager to sign a funding letter of commitment to the N.C. Dept. of Transportation (NCDOT) regarding the city betterments and aesthetics treatments for Project I-2513B and I-2513D.

Background:

- The I-26 Connector Project I-26 begins at I-40 and ends at US 19-23 (Future I-26) near Broadway Street for a total length of 4.7 miles.
- The I-26 Connector Project is included in the NCDOT 2020-2029 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) at a total estimated project cost of $1,348,880,000.
- The scope of work includes constructing a multi-lane freeway partly on new alignment.
- Sections AA and AB of this project include improvements at
    - the I-26/I-40/I-240 interchange and along I-40 between US 19-23 (Smokey Park Highway) and
    - the I-26/I-40/I-240 interchange.
- These sections are in the right-of-way phase and the anticipated construction contract letting date is November 23, 2023.
- Section AC begins at I-40 and ends at a point south of Haywood Road.
- This section is in the right-of-way phase and the anticipated construction contract letting date is February 24, 2024.
- Section C includes improvements to the I-40 interchanges with US 19-23 (Smokey Park Highway), I-26/I-240, and NC 191 (Brevard Road).
- This section will be awarded using the design-build process and the anticipated award date is during Federal Fiscal Year 2029.
- Section B of the I-26 Connector Project (NCDOT Project ID: I-2513B) begins at a point south of the Haywood Road bridge and ends at US 19-23 (Future I-26) near Broadway Street.
- Section D of the I-26 Connector Project (NCDOT Project ID: I-2513D (Riverside Drive)) begins at a point south of Hill Street and ends at Broadway Street.
- Section B and Section D of the I-26 Connector Project will be awarded together using the design-build process and the anticipated award date is October 17, 2023.
- The design-build team selection process should begin in early calendar year 2023 and takes about nine months to complete.
- City Council appointed an Aesthetics Committee in 2018 to advise the City regarding recommendations for aesthetic improvements to the I-26 Connector Project.
- The Aesthetics Committee has worked diligently during the past four years to review and recommend various aesthetic treatments that would enhance the overall experience of the I-26 Connector corridor for all users.
- For purposes of this report, a City betterment is defined as a bicycle, pedestrian, or public transportation improvement that exceeds NCDOT's standard improvements.
- An aesthetic treatment is defined as any treatment including aesthetic materials, landscaping, and lighting that exceeds NCDOT's standard treatments.
- The Aesthetics Committee recommendations are estimated at $5,889,024 and are described in detail in their report.
    - The $5,889,024 in aesthetic improvements are in addition to the previously budgeted $1,412,900 in bicycle and pedestrian improvements that are currently in the CIP.
- Staff is recommending a more narrow list of aesthetic improvements based on the priorities submitted by the Aesthetics Committee.

- Staff's recommendation prioritizes the top 3 aesthetic improvements; specifically, Bowen Bridge enhancements, the Haywood Bridge and Interchange, and the Hill Street and I-240 pedestrian bridges as well as 5 other priorities.
- The staff recommended total cost to the City is $5,400,495 and is itemized as follows:
    1. City betterments - $1,412,900 (currently planned and budgeted in the five-year capital improvement program (CIP) budget).
    2. Aesthetic treatments - $3,987,595 (not budgeted at this time).
- In order to maintain the project schedule, NCDOT needs a funding letter of commitment from the City by February 15, 2023. This letter is the first step in the approval process.
- A formal agreement will follow later this calendar year.
- The formal agreement will be for the total cost of $5,400,495 and is financially advantageous to the City as any additional costs, including cost escalations, incurred for the associated improvements will be borne by NCDOT.
- If approved by City Council, staff will program the $3,987,595 in aesthetic treatments into a future CIP and will work with funding partners including Buncombe County, the Tourism Development Agency, and the Metropolitan Planning Organization to identify potential alternative funding sources.
- According to State law, the reimbursement procedure begins on the date the construction phase begins and the City has a period of not less than three years to reimburse NCDOT the agreed upon costs (interest free).
- Based on this information, the Finance and Legal Departments have confirmed that a budget amendment is not needed at this time.

Council Goal(s):
- Transportation and Accessibility

Committee(s):
- None

Pro(s):
- Enhances the overall experience of the I-26 corridor for all users.
- Enhances the pedestrian and bicycle experience along the multi-use transportation paths and sidewalks along the side streets.
- Financially advantageous to the City as any additional costs, including cost escalations, incurred for the associated improvements will be borne by NCDOT.

Con(s):
- Cost sharing fiscal impact to the City.

Fiscal Impact:
- The anticipated total cost to the city is $5,400,495 and is itemized as follows:
    1. City betterments - $1,412,900 (currently planned in the five-year capital improvement program (CIP) budget).
    2. Aesthetic treatments - $3,987,595 (not budgeted at this time).

Suggested Motion:
- Motion to adopt a resolution authorizing the City Manager to sign a funding letter of commitment to the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) regarding the city betterments and aesthetics treatments for Project I-2513B and I-2513D.

Attachment(s):
- Resolution
- Draft Funding Commitment Letter
- Aesthetics Committee Funding Request Report

RESOLUTION NO. 23-_____

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO SIGN A FUNDING LETTER OF COMMITMENT TO THE N.C. DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION (NCDOT) REGARDING THE CITY BETTERMENTS AND AESTHETICS TREATMENTS FOR PROJECT I-2513B AND I-2513D

WHEREAS, Project I-2513 is currently listed in the NCDOT 2020-2029 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) at a total estimated project cost of $1,348,880,000; and

WHEREAS, Project I-2413 is commonly referred to as the I-26 connector project beginning at I-40 and ending at US 19-23 near Broadway Street for a total length of 4.7 miles; and

WHEREAS, the scope of work includes constructing a multi-lane freeway partly on new location; and

WHEREAS, City Council appointed an Aesthetics Committee in 2018 to advise the city regarding recommendations for aesthetic improvements to the I-26 Connector project; and

WHEREAS, The Aesthetics Committee has worked faithfully and diligently during the past four years in reviewing and suggesting various aesthetic treatments that would enhance the overall experience of the I-26 Connector corridor for all users; and

WHEREAS, Project I-2513B begins at a point south of the Haywood Road bridge and ends at I-26 (US 19-23) at the Woodfin Town limits; and

WHEREAS, Project I-2513D (Riverside Drive) begins at a point south of Hill Street and ends at Broadway Street; and

WHEREAS; Both project sections will be awarded together using the design-build process and the anticipated award date is October 17, 2023; and

WHEREAS, the total anticipated cost for the City betterments and aesthetic treatments for Projects I-2513B and I-2513D is $5,400,495;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE THAT:

The City Manager is authorized to sign a funding letter of commitment to the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) regarding the city betterments and aesthetics treatments for Projects I-2513B and I-2513D.

Read, approved and adopted this 14th day of February, 2023.

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City Clerk Mayor

Approved as to form:

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City Attorney