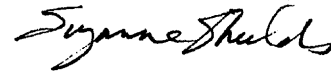


DATE: June 8, 2021



TO: C. H. Huckelberry
County Administrator

FROM: Suzanne Shields, P.E.
Director

SUBJECT: Downtown Links – Intergovernmental Agreements with City of Tucson

There will be two Intergovernmental Agreements (IGAs) with the City of Tucson (City) on the June 22, 2021 Board of Supervisors agenda. These IGAs pertain to the City's Downtown Links transportation improvement project and are a result of their request for the Regional Flood Control District's (District) participation to fund the storm drain for Arroyo Chico as part of the Downtown Links project to make up for funding shortfalls in the overall project.

BACKGROUND

The Downtown Links project is a 1.3-mile roadway extension connecting Barraza-Aviation Parkway to Interstate 10 and funded by the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) and managed by the City. Historically, the District has not provided funding assistance for drainage elements associated with RTA projects since the infrastructure is not actually for flood control, but more to mitigate the impact of the new road improvements.

In the case of the Downtown Links, this project also relocates and augments a portion of the Arroyo Chico, a watercourse in which the District has had considerable involvement including the construction of numerous detention basins at Randolph Golf Course, Cherry Field, and Park Avenue. As such, funding participation by the District is considered reasonable by the District and County Administration, and provides the final flood control improvements to protect the downtown area from flooding from Arroyo Chico.

The District saw an opportunity to achieve one of its own goals, operational control of the regional watercourses as part of an agreement with City. The City owns a considerable portion of the Santa Cruz River, and parts of Rillito Creek and Pantano Wash among other properties that contain or could contain flood control improvements that are of interest to the District. Although the District has maintenance responsibility for much of these lands, without fee ownership there have been instances of decisions being made that increase maintenance requirements and costs. By owning the watercourses in fee, the District will be involved in the discussion of future impacts earlier in the process in order to require design modification(s), which allow for reasonable long-term operations and maintenance with less constraints on the District. As part of the funding discussion, the City agreed it was in the regional interest to transfer fee ownership of these properties to the District.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENTS

The first IGA essentially is an agreement for the District to contribute \$6 million over three (3) fiscal years to assist in the construction of the large box culverts that convey the Arroyo Chico flows under

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the new roadway. The new culverts are larger than the existing, very old culverts and will reduce the flood risk to properties in the project vicinity. In addition, the IGA removes the City's obligation to construct drainage improvements along the Santa Cruz River between Irvington and Drexel. The property on which these improvements will be installed will be transferred to the District, and the District will become the entity responsible for construction. The total value of the funding assistance and the transfer of responsibility for drainage improvement construction is approximately \$8 million. This value is equivalent to the cost of construction of the Arroyo Chico drainage infrastructure. The funding assistance will be spread out over three (3) years with \$1 million provided in FY 2020/21, \$2 million in FY 2021/22, and \$3 million provided in FY 2022/23.

The second IGA is for the transfer of City property to the District. The vast majority of the parcels are within or immediately adjacent to the Santa Cruz River, Rillito River, and Pantano Creek. The District has long strived to secure operational control of these regional watercourses and the transfer of these parcels will be a significant step forward in realizing this goal. While the District agreed to maintenance responsibility of these areas in 2014, fee ownership provides the District with greater influence regarding the uses of and impacts to the river to ensure that public safety, flood risk reduction, recreational opportunity and ecosystem services are appropriately balanced.

Aside from the regional watercourses, other properties that the City will transfer to the District include parcels with existing drainage infrastructure adjacent to District infrastructure or property. Consolidating these creates efficiencies with respect to operations and maintenance.

The remaining parcels are those where drainage improvements, water harvesting and restoration, or other public amenities are being considered or planned. Over the past three years, the District's relationship with the City has evolved to include collaboration regarding the placement of neighborhood scale water harvesting basins that also serve other beneficial uses such as park space, water quality benefits and adding to the City's urban tree canopy. These parcels will allow further collaboration in these efforts.

The IGA authorized the transfer of 105 parcels immediately upon approval of the IGA, with the 65 remaining parcels to be surveyed, created and transferred over in FY 2021/22.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

SS/tj

Attachments

c: Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator – Public Works
Eric Shepp, P.E., Deputy Director – Regional Flood Control District
Andy Dinauer, P.E., Deputy Director – Regional Flood Control District