



CITY OF COSTA MESA

77 Fair Drive
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

Agenda Report

File #: 25-535

Meeting Date: 10/21/2025

TITLE:

ACCEPTANCE AND ALLOCATION OF THE 2025-26 OFFICE OF TRAFFIC SAFETY GRANT FOR THE SELECTIVE TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM

DEPARTMENT: POLICE DEPARTMENT

PRESENTED BY: NICK WILSON, SERGEANT

CONTACT INFORMATION: NICK WILSON (714) 754-4963

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the City Council:

1. Approve the proposed Resolution No. 2025-XX, which ratifies the application for a grant award from the State of California - Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) for the Selective Traffic Enforcement Program (STEP) and authorize the Interim City Manager or designee to execute the grant documents, including the Grant Agreement, and accept and administer the grant.
2. Approve revenue and expense appropriations in the amount of \$280,000, for the Fiscal Year 2025-26 OTS STEP Grant for a grant period from October 1, 2025 through September 30, 2026.

BACKGROUND:

The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration distributes federal funding to California through the Office of Traffic Safety. The mission of the Office of Traffic Safety is to effectively administer traffic safety grants that deliver innovative programs and eliminate traffic fatalities and injuries on California roadways. Grants are used to mitigate traffic safety program deficiencies, expand ongoing programs, and/or to develop new programs. Grant funding cannot replace existing program expenditures, nor can traffic safety funds be used for program maintenance, research, rehabilitation, and/or construction.

The Police Department has been awarded similar OTS grants in the past, which have significantly assisted the objectives of the Traffic Safety Bureau and improved traffic safety for residents and visitors in Costa Mesa. Since 2005, the Office of Traffic Safety has awarded the Costa Mesa Police Department nineteen (19) traffic safety related grants. The funds associated with these grants were used to purchase specialized equipment and to fund the costs of personnel working targeted traffic operations. During each grant year, the Traffic Safety Bureau successfully accomplished grant operational objectives.

Traffic safety for vehicular traffic, bicycles and pedestrians is a vital concern as the city promotes a healthy, active lifestyle and sustainable transportation options, and OTS grants assist in addressing these worthy goals. Additionally, the Traffic Safety Bureau prioritizes public awareness campaigns and community events aimed at educating residents about the importance of mutual respect among all road users. By fostering a culture of safety, Costa Mesa strives to make its streets safer and more enjoyable for all residents and visitors.

ANALYSIS:

The Office of Traffic Safety assembles collision data rankings based on city population numbers. The most recent year of compiled statistics used by OTS was 2022. Costa Mesa was then ranked with 61 other cities with a population of 100,001-250,000. During 2022, Costa Mesa ranked 35th for total number of injury crashes. In the OTS rankings #1 would refer to the highest number of injury crashes in the comparative group of cities. The ranking of 35th means Costa Mesa is average among other cities of similar size for injury crashes. The OTS STEP grant provides funding for enforcement of violations that are the leading causes of collisions with the goal of improving the safety of all roadway users.

Along with reducing collisions, impaired driving enforcement has always been a top priority for the Police Department. The Department's commitment to DUI enforcement is evident in the OTS data rankings. Costa Mesa had the top OTS ranking 61 of 61 other cities for DUI arrests (889 arrests) in 2022. This means the Police Department made more DUI arrests than any of the 60 other cities in our population group.

Historically, the Department staffed a full-time impaired driving enforcement team consisting of two (2) full-time officers to help address roadway safety. Over the years, the DUI team has been suspended due to staffing challenges within the department. As of September 2025, increased staffing has allowed for the full-time DUI team to commence once again. OTS grant funding helps to supplement DUI enforcement each year by funding DUI patrols on an overtime basis.

Since the 2014 addition of driving under the influence of drugs (DUID) laws, CMPD has used grant funds to train new officers so they can actively enforce these new and highly technical laws.

The OTS STEP Grant also funds DUI checkpoints. These checkpoints are educational, highly visible, and provide a deterrent against impaired driving. Additionally, checkpoints require a significant number of personnel to operate effectively and thus costly. Without grant funding, the Department's ability to address DUI drivers through enforcement operations and DUI checkpoints would be very limited.

The Police Department submitted applications and received tentative approval for the 2025-26 OTS STEP Grant. The grant will allow the Department to implement the Selective Traffic Enforcement Program (STEP). This program will provide a comprehensive approach to reducing violations, which commonly lead to collisions, while maintaining a focus on impaired and suspended/unlicensed drivers. Grant funds will be used to staff sobriety/driver license checkpoints and to staff targeted enforcement operations. In addition, funds will be used to purchase operation related equipment and support additional law enforcement training related to DUI investigations and enforcement activities. This grant also emphasizes the importance of raising awareness and educating the public through press releases, social media, and highly visible operations. It requires a minimum of four (4)

educational presentations to the community, focusing on topics such as bicycle and pedestrian safety, seat belts, distracted driving, and child passenger safety. The grant objectives to implement public education, provide advanced officer training, and conduct high visibility enforcement operations, will support the Police Department's overall goal of reducing injury collisions and saving lives.

The Department's current grant expired on September 30, 2025. The 2025-2026 grant will enable the Police Department to build upon successes achieved to date, while providing new objectives for increasing traffic safety throughout the City. The funding will allow the Department additional resources to combat impaired driving and enforce traffic laws aimed at saving lives. Objectives of the OTS grant includes DUI saturation patrols; traffic enforcement operations targeting red lights and excessive speed; distracted driving violations; traffic enforcement at high collision intersections; and sobriety/driver license checkpoints.

Currently there are 33 objectives outlined in the OTS grant agreement. A few of those specific project objectives include:

- Conduct four (4) Traffic Safety educational presentation(s) with an effort to reach community members. Note: Presentation(s) may include topics such as distracted driving, DUI, speed, bicycle and pedestrian safety, seat belts and child passenger safety.
- Participate in National Pedestrian Safety Month, National Walk to School Day, National Teen Driver Safety Week, National Bicycle Safety Month, and several other national campaigns related to driving awareness.
- Conduct thirty-five (35) DUI saturation patrols.
- Conduct nine (9) special traffic safety enforcement operations targeting red light, excessive speed, and other violations at or near intersections with a disproportionate number of traffic collisions.
- Conduct ten (10) special enforcement operations targeting distracted driving violations.
- Conduct two (2) special traffic safety enforcement operations targeting vehicles that pose a threat to bicyclists and pedestrians.
- Conduct four (4) DUI/DL checkpoints.
- Participate in two (2) highly visible collaborative Traffic Enforcement operations.
- Provide advanced officer training in DUI enforcement to 14 officers.

OTS grant funding is based on the federal fiscal year, which begins on October 1, 2025, and ends on September 30, 2026. The Grant Agreement allocates \$280,000, which will be utilized over the federal fiscal year 12-month period. OTS will reimburse the City for approved grant expenditures throughout the grant period.

Although the majority of OTS STEP grant is designed to support enforcement efforts with the goal of reducing injury traffic collisions, the Traffic Safety Bureau recognizes that it is only through enforcement and education that we can fully realize this goal.

Therefore, in addition to the grant educational requirements, the Traffic Safety Bureau will continue to pursue additional educational efforts to improve roadway safety unrelated to this grant, including collaborating on a city service agreement to provide bicycle safety programming for students and the

community at all Newport Mesa Unified School District schools in Costa Mesa. The Traffic Safety Bureau is committed to collaborating with the community for educational purposes related to bicycle and pedestrian safety.

The Traffic Safety Bureau will continue to work collaboratively with the City's Transportation Services Office to identify hazards which can be mitigated through environmental design. Additionally, City departments will continue to promote traffic safety education utilizing public service announcements and social media.

ALTERNATIVES:

The City Council may elect not to accept the grant; however, the Department would not be able to pursue the specific goals outlined in the report.

FISCAL REVIEW:

Upon acceptance of the Fiscal Year 2025-26 OTS STEP Grant, revenue, and expense appropriations in the amount of \$280,000 respectively will be established in the State Grant Fund (Fund 231). The grant period is from October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026. The grant is estimated to cover the full expenditure of the program.

LEGAL REVIEW:

The City Attorney's Office has reviewed the 2025 OTS STEP Grant Agreement, proposed resolution, and this report, and has approved them as to form.

CITY COUNCIL GOALS AND PRIORITIES:

This item supports the City Council Goal:

- Strengthen the public's safety and improve the quality of life.

CONCLUSION:

Staff recommends the City Council:

1. Approve the proposed Resolution No. 2025-XX, which ratifies the application for a grant award from the State of California - Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) for the Selective Traffic Enforcement Program (STEP) and authorize the Interim City Manager or designee to execute the grant documents, including the Grant Agreement, and accept and administer the grant.
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