



CITY OF COSTA MESA

77 Fair Drive
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

Agenda Report

File #: 23-1406

Meeting Date: 10/17/2023

TITLE:

ACCEPTANCE AND ALLOCATION OF THE 2023-24 OFFICE OF TRAFFIC SAFETY GRANT FOR THE SELECTIVE TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM

DEPARTMENT: POLICE DEPARTMENT

PRESENTED BY: JARED BARNES, SERGEANT

CONTACT INFORMATION: JARED BARNES, SERGEANT, (714) 754-5125

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the City Council:

1. Approve the proposed Resolution No. 2023-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 City Manager or designee to execute all grant documents, including the Grant Agreement, and accept and administer the grant.
2. Approve revenue and expense appropriations in the amount of \$285,000, respectively, for the 2023-24 OTS STEP Grant.

BACKGROUND:

The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration distributes federal funding to California through the Office of Traffic Safety (OTS). Grants are used to mitigate traffic safety program deficiencies, expand ongoing programs, and/or 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 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.

ANALYSIS:

Since 2005, the Office of Traffic Safety has awarded the Costa Mesa Police Department eighteen (18) traffic safety related grants. The funds associated with these grants were used to purchase specialized equipment and to fund the cost of personnel working targeted traffic safety, education and enforcement operations.

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 for 2020. Costa Mesa was then ranked with 61 other cities with a population of 100,001-250,000.

Along with injury collisions, impaired driving enforcement has always been a top priority for the Police Department. From 1986-2014, the Department staffed a full-time impaired driving enforcement team consisting of two (2) full-time officers. However, based upon Police Department contraction in previous years, the full-time DUI Team was discontinued in 2014. The DUI Team was reestablished in January 2021. The previous STEP Grant was used to supplement the DUI Team by funding officers to saturate the area looking for suspected DUI drivers. Without this grant, the Department's ability to address DUI drivers is limited.

Aside from the DUI enforcement team, the STEP Grant funds DUI checkpoints. These checkpoints are educational, highly visible, and provide a deterrent against impaired driving. Additionally, the Department promotes these checkpoints through press releases and social media posts and provides educational handouts to each driver contacted to further spread the word about the dangers and consequences of driving under the influence. The Department's commitment to DUI enforcement is evident in the OTS data rankings. In the CHP Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System (SWITRS) report, Costa Mesa had the best ranking for DUI arrests in 2012 (847 arrests) and 2013 (717 arrests) out of 56 cities in the population group. During those years, the Department had a full-time DUI team.

As set forth in the OTS rankings, in 2013, the Costa Mesa Police Department made 717 DUI arrests for the year. With the absence of the DUI team, the Department made 380 DUI arrests in 2014, 356 DUI arrests in 2015, 421 DUI arrests in 2016, and 345 arrests in 2017. Based on the City's data, the Department made 397 DUI arrests in 2018, 461 DUI arrests in 2019, 308 DUI arrests in 2020, 1093 DUI arrests in 2021, and 941 DUI arrests in 2022.

With the 2014 addition of driving under the influence of drugs (DUID) provisions to the California Vehicle Code (CVC) (Sections 23152(f) and (g)), we are now able to accurately track the DUID problem in Costa Mesa. In 2014, 37 arrests were made for DUID or combinations of drugs/alcohol and that number nearly doubled in 2015 to 63. Subsequently, there were 75 DUID arrests in 2016, 107 DUID arrests in 2017, 106 DUID arrests in 2018, 65 DUID arrests in 2019, 127 DUID arrests in 2020, 135 DUID arrests in 2021, and 150 DUID arrests in 2022.

A portion of OTS grant funding supports public awareness campaigns focusing on bicycle and pedestrian safety, as well as other educational programs. The Police Department has historically utilized this support to focus efforts on educating school age children and young adults. In 2023, the Police Department conducted bicycle safety presentations at Tewinkle Middle School and College Park Elementary School for hundreds of students. These presentations include bicycle safety education related to rules of the road and helmet safety. Furthermore, in April 2023, the Traffic Safety Bureau assisted at a bike safety assembly and rodeo at Victoria Elementary School for the entire student body. The Traffic Safety Bureau also provided support and outreach for the Walk N' Rollers bike safety event/rodeo at Estancia High School. Additionally, we have leveraged social media to raise public awareness about E-bike safety, given the significant increase in E-bike usage within our community in recent years. Additionally, this grant funds enforcement campaigns specifically focused on preventing dangerous driving that endangers pedestrians and bicyclists.

The Police Department submitted applications and received tentative approval for the 2023 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. The implementation of this training, along with the STEP enforcement operations, will help achieve the overall goal of reducing injury collisions, saving lives, and reducing liability.

The Department's current grant expired on September 30, 2023. The 2023-24 grant will enable the Police Department to build upon successes achieved to date, while providing new objectives for increasing traffic safety, education, and awareness 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 include DUI saturation patrols; traffic enforcement operations focused on red light violations, excessive speed; reckless driving; distracted driving violations; traffic enforcement at high collision intersections; and sobriety/driver license checkpoints.

Some specific project objectives from the Grant Agreement include:

- Conduct four (4) DUI/DL checkpoints.
- Conduct 20 DUI saturation patrols.
- Conduct 26 special traffic enforcement operations focused on red light violations, excessive speed and other violations at or near intersections with a disproportionate number of traffic collisions.
- Conduct four (4) special enforcement operations targeting distracted driving violations.
- Conduct two (2) bicycle and pedestrian safety operations.
- Provide advanced officer training in DUI enforcement to eight (8) officers.

OTS grant funding is based on the federal fiscal year, which begins on October 1, 2023, and ends on September 30, 2024. The Grant Agreement allocates \$285,000, 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.

This grant supports the Traffic Safety Bureau's goals of reducing injury traffic collisions through education and enforcement efforts.

In 2024, the Traffic Safety Bureau will pursue additional 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 will continue to work cooperatively with the City's Transportation Services Office to identify hazards that can be mitigated through environmental design. Additionally, City departments will work collaboratively on additional educational programming to include public service announcements and educational videos on traffic safety.

ALTERNATIVES:

The City Council may elect to not 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 2023-24 OTS STEP Grant, revenue and expense appropriations in the amount of \$285,000 respectively will be established for the grant. The grant period is from October 1, 2023, to September 30, 2024.

LEGAL REVIEW:

The City Attorney's Office has reviewed the 2023-24 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 Public Safety and Improve the Quality of Life

CONCLUSION:

Staff recommends the City Council:

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