

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HOLLY J. MITCHELL

May 7, 2024

Accelerating Vision Zero through the Florence-Firestone for All Project

The unincorporated community of Florence-Firestone, while barely 3.5 square miles, sadly experiences among the highest rates of fatal and severe injury traffic collisions throughout Los Angeles County (County). Over the past decade, the Department of Public Works (DPW) reports that 69 people were killed and 260 were severely injured on roadways in this neighborhood. The share of fatal and severe injury motor vehicle collisions involving people walking is nearly 36 percent in Florence-Firestone, compared to 20 percent in the unincorporated County overall. Additionally, the County’s Vision Zero Action Plan identified every major street in Florence-Firestone as a Collision Concentration Corridor, with Firestone Boulevard, Alameda Street, and 92nd Street ranking in the top 20.

Recognizing the traffic safety crisis in Florence-Firestone, DPW, in collaboration with the Department of Public Health and the Department of Arts and Culture, applied for the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT)’s Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) competitive grant program in September 2022. The SS4A program was established by President Biden’s historic bipartisan infrastructure law and provides \$5 billion over five years for regional, local, and Tribal initiatives to prevent deaths and serious injuries on the nation’s roadways.

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In February 2023, the USDOT awarded \$21.5 million to the County¹ to support the urgent need for several traffic safety improvements in Florence-Firestone, including:

- Designing and constructing proven safety countermeasures along three Collision Concentration Corridors;
- Launching a Safe Routes for Seniors Program to ensure infrastructure meets the needs of an aging population;
- Providing teen-focused traffic safety engagement to prevent distracted and impaired driving and discourage street racing;
- Implementing demonstration projects on two streets to obtain community feedback and buy-in on proposed roadway reconfigurations; and
- Conducting arts and culture engagement with community members to develop strategies for safer streets through incorporating art into infrastructure.

The Florence-Firestone for All: Achieving Vision Zero in South Los Angeles Project (Project) represents a transformational investment in one of the most historically disadvantaged communities in the unincorporated areas. This Project will not only improve road safety, but also seeks to reverse the environmental burdens felt by its 64,109 residents, by providing safer car-free access to transit, parks, schools, healthcare, and other destinations.

It is critical that this life-saving work in Florence-Firestone begin without delay and that the Director of DPW have the necessary delegated authority to enter into a federal agreement to accept the funding awarded by the USDOT and begin work on the Project. In addition, the Director of DPW should also be provided the necessary delegated authority to enter into federal agreements for any future USDOT awarded funding under the SS4A discretionary grant program.

I THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Find that the proposed *Florence-Firestone for All: Achieving Vision Zero in South Los Angeles* Project (Project) is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15301(c), 15304(h), 15306, and 15322 of the

¹ <https://lacounty.gov/2023/02/08/la-county-vision-zero-project-in-florence-firestone-awarded-21-49-million-federal-implementation-grant/>

State CEQA Guidelines, Section 21080.25(b) of the California Public Resources Code, and Classes 1(f), 1(x), 4(n), 6(b), and 22(c) of the County's Environmental Document Reporting Procedures and Guidelines, Appendix G. The Project relates to operations, maintenance, and minor alterations of existing streets, sidewalks, and similar facilities; performing small scale demonstrations, collecting information, and engaging the community about current and future improvements; educational programs to inform students about traffic safety; and new and existing pedestrian and bicycle facilities which improve safety, access, and mobility within the public right-of-way and do not induce single occupancy vehicle trips, add additional highway lanes, or widen highways. In addition, based on the proposed Project records, it will comply with all applicable regulations, and it is not in a sensitive environment, and there are no cumulative impacts, unusual circumstances, damage to scenic highways, listing on hazardous waste site lists compiled pursuant to Government Code section 65962.5, or indications that it may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource that would make the exemption inapplicable.

2. Authorize the Director of the Department of Public Works (DPW) to file a Notice of Exemption for the proposed Project, within five working days, in accordance with section 21152 of the California Public Resources Code and post the notice to the County's website in accordance with section 21092.2.
3. Authorize the Director of DPW, or his designee, to accept grant funds up to \$21.5 million from the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT), or its administering agencies, for the Project; execute all necessary applications, contracts, certifications and assurances, agreements, reports, or any other required USDOT documents pertaining to the Project; execute any necessary amendments including time extensions to complete the various components of the project, minor changes in project scope, and alterations in the grant amount, subject to approval of such documents by County Counsel; and to sign and submit requests for payment from USDOT.
4. Authorize the Director of DPW, or his designee, to accept grant funds from the

USDOT, or its administering agencies, for future awards under the Safe Streets and Roads for All discretionary grant program, up to \$35 million each cycle, to allow for the immediate and streamlined implementation of traffic safety projects and programs; execute all necessary applications, contracts, certifications and assurances, agreements, reports, or any other required USDOT documents pertaining to future projects; execute any necessary amendments including time extensions to complete the various components of future projects, minor changes in project scope, and alterations in the grant amount, subject to approval of such documents by County Counsel; and to sign and submit requests for payment from USDOT, provided the Board of Supervisors is given advance notification before acceptance of each grant award.

5. Find that delegating authority to the Director of DPW, or his designee, to accept grant funding from Federal agencies and executing all associated documents as outlined in Directive 4 of this motion is not a project pursuant to Section 15378(b) of the CEQA Guidelines, because it creates a government funding mechanism that does not involve a commitment to a specific project which may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment, and is excluded from the definition of a project under CEQA; and DPW shall take necessary actions to ensure that appropriate findings are made under CEQA prior to implementing any activity for future projects which would be considered a project under CEQA.

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(KaS/AY)