



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

## LAND USE AGENDA ITEM

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**DATE:** February 11, 2026

**04**

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

### **SUBJECT**

**ADVERTISE AND AWARD A CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT FOR SOUTH MISSION ROAD (NORTH SEGMENT) GREEN STREET PROJECT AND RELATED CEQA EXEMPTION (DISTRICT: 5)**

### **OVERVIEW**

The South Mission Road Green Street Project is a project that is part of the County's Green Streets Clean Water (GSCW) Plan, published in Spring 2022, which identifies opportunities within the unincorporated County of San Diego to implement green infrastructure in the road right-of-way. Green infrastructure projects, including green streets projects sited in the County road right-of-way, capture, slow down, and filter stormwater to reduce pollutants before they reach local waterbodies. The GSCW Plan and other green infrastructure projects support the County's compliance with the Regional Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit and Trash Amendments, which require local agencies to control the discharge of bacteria, trash, and other pollutants. To meet these requirements, the Department of Public Works (DPW) manages a green infrastructure capital program to improve local water quality.

This project is located in Fallbrook along South Mission Road (between Mission Oaks Road and Ammunition Road) and advances goals to improve water quality in the San Luis Rey River Watershed, which drains to the Pacific Ocean and which is subject to the MS4 Permit. The first phase of this project was funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) was approved on August 28, 2024(4), is currently underway and will be completed in Spring 2026. To reach compliance with the MS4 Permit, Both phases of the Project incorporate structural Best Management Practices (BMPs) that are designed to reduce stormwater runoff and improve water quality during both wet and dry weather periods. If the Project does not move forward, the County risks future compliance with the MS4 Permit. The second phase of the Project will include installation of biofiltration basins to filter pollutants from stormwater runoff that would otherwise discharge into a tributary of the San Luis Rey River. Additionally, tree wells will be constructed to filter pollutants from stormwater before entering the storm drain along South Mission Road.

This is a request to approve the advertisement and subsequent award of a construction contract for the South Mission Road (North Segment) Green Street Project. If approved, construction is scheduled to begin in mid-2026 and be completed in mid-2027. The total project cost, including

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design, environmental review, construction, and contingency is estimated at \$7,700,000. The funding source is available prior-year General Fund fund balance and bond proceeds.

**RECOMMENDATION(S)**

**CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**

1. Find that the South Mission Road (North Segment) Green Street Project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15301 and 15303 of the CEQA Guidelines since the activities include minor improvements within existing right-of-way.
2. Authorize the Director, Department of Purchasing and Contracting, to advertise and award a construction contract and to take any other action authorized by Section 401 et seq. of the Administrative Code for South Mission Road (North Segment) Green Street Project.
3. Designate the Director, Department of Public Works, as County Officer responsible for administering the construction contract, in accordance with Board Policy F-41, Public Works Construction Projects.

**EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

The Department of Public Works (DPW) strives to preserve, enhance, and promote quality of life and public safety through the responsible development and maintenance of reliable and sustainable infrastructure and services in the unincorporated area. To ensure that we are fairly and equitably serving all communities, while simultaneously complying with mandatory federal and State stormwater regulations, DPW uses a variety of tools to prioritize stormwater infrastructure improvement projects and to ensure that historically underserved populations are prioritized. The data used by DPW to evaluate and identify underserved populations includes data from the Healthy Places Index (HPI), CalEnviroScreen 4.0, San Diego LiveWell communities, Environmental Justice Communities, and other data sources. This project enhances the built environment by adding green spaces and creating safe and accessible streets; therefore, the project can help increase the HPI in an area that has an HPI percentile rank between 31% and 38% which indicates that between 62% and 69% of other California census tracts have healthier community conditions.

**SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

This Project will provide environmental, social, and health and wellbeing sustainability benefits. It proposes 23 tree wells and 6 biofiltration basins which are green infrastructure that will help improve water quality by reducing the amount of pollution within existing storm drains. The Project will help restore the beneficial uses of local surface waters by improving habitat, community aesthetics and increasing recreational opportunities. The added trees will also help improve air quality, enhance public areas and provide shade. The Project aligns with the County of San Diego's sustainability goals of protecting and promoting natural resources, diverse habitats, and sensitive species, as it also enhances the natural environment for residents, visitors, and future generations to enjoy. In addition, the trees planted with this project will help the County meet its Climate Action Plan goal of expanding the canopy across the unincorporated area prioritizing underserved communities.

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### **FISCAL IMPACT**

Funds for this request are included in the Fiscal Year 2025-26 Operational Plan in the Department of Public Works (DPW) Road Fund. If approved, this request will result in total project estimated costs and revenue of \$7,700,000 for the South Mission Road (North Segment) Green Street Project. The funding source is available prior year General Fund fund balance (\$1,700,000) and bond proceeds (\$6,000,000). There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

### **BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT**

County construction contracts are competitively and publicly bid and help stimulate the local economy by creating primarily construction-related employment opportunities. All workers employed on public works projects must be paid prevailing wages determined by the California Department of Industrial Relations, according to the type of work and location of the project. The prevailing wage rates are typically based on rates specified in collective bargaining agreements. A skilled and trained workforce requirement will be included in the contract in compliance with the County's Working Families Ordinance requirements for County construction projects.

### **ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT**

On April 15, 2024, Department of Public Works staff met with Fallbrook Community Planning Group (FCPG) to present the proposed Project. The FCPG voted 13 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstain, and 2 absent to recommend approval of this Project. FCPG members later selected the tree species for the project through their Design Review Board.

### **BACKGROUND**

Federal and State laws require local governments to control pollution that enters waterways through streets, storm drains, and other features of the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4). In 2013, the State of California San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) issued an updated MS4 Permit to 21 regional agencies, including the County of San Diego (County). This MS4 Permit established rules for how stormwater runoff entering and discharges from the MS4 must be controlled. Among these requirements the Permit mandated responsible parties to develop Watershed Management Area Water Quality Improvement Plans (WQIPs) for each of the region's watersheds and established Total Daily Maximum Load (TMDL) limitations for pollutants impacting waterbodies. TMDL limitations require a reduction of bacteria, nutrients, and sediments from MS4 runoff during both dry and wet weather conditions, which help to protect receiving waters and their beneficial uses, such as water recreation, wildlife habitat, and preservation of rare and endangered species. In addition, the State Water Resources Control Board adopted regulations in 2013 and 2015 requiring local agencies to control the discharge of trash and dry weather flows from the MS4 into surface waters (Trash Amendments). The purpose of these regulations is also to protect and enhance the quality of receiving waters such as creeks, rivers, and the ocean that are designated for beneficial uses.

The Department of Public Works (DPW) has a green infrastructure capital program that implements projects designed to improve local water quality and comply with state requirements. To aid in the implementation of this program, DPW published the Green Streets Clean Water

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(GSCW) Plan in spring 2022 and identified multi-benefit green streets opportunities across nearly 1,200 miles of roads within 24 unincorporated community planning areas. Green streets are projects that implement green infrastructure within the County road right-of-way to capture, slow down, and filter stormwater. These projects are designed to treat runoff from impervious areas such as streets, sidewalks, and adjacent land areas. Additionally, green streets facilities provide a more conducive environment for walking, biking, and transit use, which supports health, improves the environment, and delivers community benefits.

This Project is a priority for its water quality benefits, community benefits, cost effectiveness, and combined total score from the GSCW Plan, which developed a ranking framework as a numeric quantification method that generally follows the 2017 San Diego Stormwater Resource Plan (SWRP) prioritization framework, but is supplemented with the 2018 Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure’s Envision (ISI) metrics and 2019 Safe Clean Water (SCW) metrics. The Project is the second phase of two phases which the Board previously approved the first phase of the South Mission (North Segment) Green Street project on August 28, 2024 (4) to remove trash and improve water quality in the San Luis Rey River. That project was funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), is currently underway and will be completed in Spring 2026, meeting ARPA’s completion requirements. The GSCW Plan identified areas for improvement along South Mission Road (between Mission Oaks Road and Ammunition Road) in the community of Fallbrook. It will help to improve water quality in the San Luis Rey River Watershed.

To address requirements of the MS4 Permit and the Trash Amendments, this Project will install biofiltration basins to capture and filter pollutants from stormwater that would otherwise discharge to a tributary of the San Luis Rey River. The Project will also include tree wells to capture and filter pollutants from stormwater before entering the storm drain – improving water quality from the San Luis Rey Watershed all the way to the Pacific Ocean.

This is a request to approve the advertisement and subsequent award of a construction contract to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder for the South Mission Road (North Segment) Green Street Project. If approved, construction is scheduled to begin in mid-2026 and be completed in mid-2027. The total project cost including design, environmental review, and construction, including contingency, is estimated at \$7,700,000. The funding source is available prior year General Fund fund balance from DPW General Fund Watershed Protection Program.

**ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT**

The Project improvements, including construction of stormwater quality structural best management practices (BMPs) and infrastructure improvements within South Mission Road, are exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15301 (Existing Facilities) and 15303 (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures) because the Project involves the construction of additional small structures and facilities within existing right-of-way.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15303 exempts from CEQA review the construction and location of limited numbers of new, small facilities or structures. This exemption is applicable because the

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action involves authorization for construction of a trash capture device, biofiltration basins and associated water system improvements. The proposed trash capture device and biofiltration basins are intended to ensure trash and pollutants are not discharged in stormwater runoff from the County's adjacent streets drains. The improvements are properly viewed as being accessory to the existing street or as small new construction within the scope of Section 15303 when compared to the examples provided in the CEQA Guidelines.

The project is also exempt from CEQA review by Section 15301 of the CEQA guidelines. This section exempts projects which consist of the operation, repair, maintenance, or minor alteration of existing public structures. The critical factor is that the project involves no or negligible expansion of an existing use. The exemption specifically identifies work on existing highways and streets as falling within the scope of the exemption. The proposed project is to add a limited number of new facilities to ensure existing drainage from a County road complies with MS4Permit requirements. The project does not expand existing road uses. As such, the project is exempt from CEQA review under Section 15301 of the CEQA Guidelines.

**LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN**

Today's recommendations support the Sustainability, Community, and Equity Strategic Initiatives in the County of San Diego's 2026-2031 Strategic Plan by utilizing sustainable construction practices, focusing on underserved communities, and providing adequate maintenance to ensure safe communities that improve the quality of life of all residents.

Respectfully submitted,



DAHVIA LYNCH

Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

**ATTACHMENT(S)**

A. Vicinity Map