



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

LAND USE AGENDA ITEM

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DATE: May 20, 2026

01

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

ESTABLISH APPROPRIATIONS AND ADVERTISE AND AWARD CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT FOR GUARDRAIL REPLACEMENT AND REPAIR AND RELATED CEQA EXEMPTION IN THE COMMUNITIES OF PAULA-PAUMA, FALLBROOK, VALLEY CENTER, PALOMAR, RAINBOW, ALPINE, AND DESCANSO (DISTRICTS: 2 & 5)

OVERVIEW

The County of San Diego (County) Department of Public Works (DPW) is responsible for the maintenance and operation of nearly 2,000 centerline miles of County-maintained roads, including more than 56 miles of guardrails. Centerline miles represent the total length of the roads regardless of the number of lanes or overall roadway width. Guardrails are installed along the edge of the roadway to enhance safety by preventing motorists from unintentionally leaving the roadway and may also reduce the severity of a crash. DPW has developed a list of eight guardrail replacement and repair sites on County-maintained roads in the communities of Pala-Pauma, Fallbrook, Valley Center, Palomar, Rainbow, Alpine, and Descanso. Guardrails that have been identified for this project were prioritized based on traffic volume, speed limit, nearby hazards or utilities, guardrail condition, slope severity, and traffic patterns associated with nearby underserved communities. DPW has developed similar projects for guardrail upgrade, repair, replacement, and installation in past years and will continue to evaluate needs and identify locations on an annual basis as funding is available.

In September 2023, DPW applied for a Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) grant to design and construct guardrail upgrades at eight sites. HSIP is a federal-aid grant program, administered by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) for the purpose of achieving a significant reduction in fatalities and serious injuries on public roads. The preliminary engineering funding was authorized by Caltrans in November 2023 and the engineering phase of the project is now complete. DPW is now ready to proceed with the construction phase. DPW anticipates receiving additional grant funds from Caltrans for construction, pursuant to the Highway Safety Improvement Program. If these funds are not forthcoming or a lower than expected amount of funding is received, DPW will reevaluate the scope of the project; and, if possible, proceed with the award of a construction contract with a reduced number of guardrail replacement locations.

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This is a request to establish appropriations and approve the advertisement and subsequent award of a construction contract for the replacement and repair of segments of guardrail at eight sites in the communities of Pala-Pauma, Fallbrook, Valley Center, Palomar, Rainbow, Alpine, and Descanso on County-maintained roads. If this item is approved today, construction will begin in Summer 2027 and be completed by Spring 2028. The total project cost, including design, environmental review, and construction, is estimated at \$1,241,590 and consists of \$471,590 for design, inspection, and environmental review and \$770,000 for construction, which includes a 20% contingency to cover unexpected costs that may arise during construction. This project is funded by the Highway Safety Improvement Program, a federal grant program administered by Caltrans (\$859,262) and available prior year Road Fund fund balance (\$382,328). Today's action includes an anticipated appropriation of \$770,000 in funds for the construction component of the project. These funds will be combined with existing appropriations to cover the entire estimated project cost of \$1,241,590.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

1. Find in accordance with Section 15301 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines that the proposed project is categorically exempt from CEQA review because it involves the repair and replacement of guardrails along existing County-maintained roadways involving no or negligible expansion of existing use.
2. Establish appropriations of \$770,000 in the Department of Public Works Road Fund, Services & Supplies, for construction of the Guardrails Highway Safety Improvement Program project based on Highway Safety Improvement Program (\$600,600) and available prior year Road Fund fund balance (\$169,400). **(4 VOTES)**
3. Authorize the Director, Department of Purchasing and Contracting, to take any action necessary to advertise and award a contract and to take other actions authorized by Section 401 et seq., of the Administrative Code with respect to contracting for guardrail repair and replacement in the communities of Paula-Pauma, Fallbrook, Valley Center, Palomar, Rainbow, Alpine, and Descanso on County- maintained roads.
4. Designate the Director, Department of Public Works, as the County Officer responsible for administering the construction contract in accordance with Board Policy F-41, Public Works Construction Projects.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The replacement of guardrails supports vehicle safety on County of San Diego maintained roads and helps ensure that the transportation system is safe for all road users, for all modes of transportation, in all communities, and for all people. Data-driven safety initiatives are developed and administered considering equity as a key factor. Understanding travel patterns within

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underserved communities will allow the Department of Public Works (DPW) to identify actions to address the underlying factors and causes that can impact safety.

The Highway Safety Improvement Program, administered by Caltrans and DPW, utilizes this approach to identify high-priority projects that achieve a significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries on public roads. DPW conducts routine inspections of facilities and roadways and relies on various community engagement methods such as the Tell Us Now! Mobile app and toll-free hotlines to intake reports of safety concerns. To ensure that underserved populations are prioritized during the project selection process, data is used by DPW to evaluate and identify vulnerable populations, including data from the Healthy Places Index, the most recent version of CalEnviroScreen (4.0), San Diego LiveWell communities, Environmental Justice Communities, and other relevant data sources. As a result of this approach, all eight locations included in this project fall within and serve underserved communities. These project locations are part of the critical transportation infrastructure used to access the surrounding underserved communities.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The project will contribute to environmental and health and well-being sustainability goals of the County of San Diego. The replacement of the metal beam guardrails will improve roadway safety for the community. The existing steel materials that will be removed during this project will be recycled, which will reduce waste. Guardrail replacement with steel materials will further support recycling in the future and promote the County's solid waste diversion goals in the Climate Action Plan. The sustainable practices implemented as part of this project will have a positive impact on sustainability in our region as well as globally.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funds for this request are partially included in the Fiscal Year 2025-26 Operational Plan in the Department of Public Works Road Fund. If approved, this request will establish additional appropriations of \$770,000, resulting in additional costs and revenue for DPW Road Fund, as outlined in Recommendation 1. The total estimated project cost is \$1,241,590 consisting of \$471,590 for design, inspection, and environmental review, and \$770,000 for construction, including 20% contingency for unforeseen conditions. The funding sources are Highway Safety Improvement Program, a federal grant program administered by Caltrans (\$859,262) and available prior year Road Fund fund balance (\$382,328). There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

County of San Diego construction contracts are also publicly advertised and competitively bid and help stimulate the local economy. Construction is administered in conformance with federal standards for labor practices, wage requirements, safety standards, the County of San Diego's Working Families Ordinance and are subject to ongoing reporting and verification of compliance with these federal provisions. All workers employed on public works projects must be paid

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prevailing wages determined by the California Department of Industrial Relations, according to the type of work and location of the project.

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

Community Planning and Sponsor Groups in the affected areas of Paula-Pauma, Fallbrook, Valley Center, Palomar, Rainbow, Alpine, and Descanso have been notified that the Board is considering these projects today, but have not provided a formal response.

BACKGROUND

The County of San Diego's (County) Department of Public Works (DPW) is responsible for the maintenance and operation of nearly 2,000 centerline miles of County-maintained roads, including more than 56 miles of guardrails. Centerline miles represent the total length of the roads regardless of the number of lanes or overall roadway width. Guardrails are installed along the edge of the roadway and can redirect an errant vehicle back onto the roadway, can slow the vehicle down to a complete stop, or in certain circumstances, can slow the vehicle down and then let it proceed on the roadway. Research and studies have found that improving roadside guardrails or barriers is one of the most effective measures to reduce and mitigate vehicle crash severity in situations where vehicles unintentionally leave the roadway. In September 2023, DPW applied for a Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) grant to design and construct guardrail upgrades at eight sites. HSIP is a federal-aid grant program, administered by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) for the purpose of achieving a significant reduction in fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads. In November 2023, DPW was awarded an HSIP grant for this project, and the preliminary engineering funding was subsequently authorized by Caltrans for use. With the preliminary engineering phase of the project now complete, DPW is moving into the construction phase and is requesting appropriations for construction activities.

DPW has developed a list of eight guardrail replacement and repair sites in the communities of Pala-Pauma, Fallbrook, Valley Center, Palomar, Rainbow, Alpine, and Descanso on County-maintained roads. Guardrails that have been identified for this project were prioritized based on traffic volume, speed limit, nearby hazards or utilities, guardrail condition, slope severity, and traffic patterns associated with nearby underserved communities. The eight locations are within underserved areas and will benefit the communities identified in the table below. Sustainable construction practices, such as recycling old guardrails and ensuring recyclable materials are used for new guardrails, will be employed during this project. DPW has developed similar guardrail projects in past years and will continue to evaluate needs and identify locations for upgrade, repair, replacement, and installation of guardrail systems on an annual basis as funding is available.

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Site	District	Community	Location	Length (feet)
1	5	Pala-Pauma	Valley Center Rd - East of 34815	100
2	5	Fallbrook	Lake Circle Dr - South of Dulin Rd	100
3	5	Valley Center	Lilac Rd - Bridge at 30510	225
4	2	Descanso	Riverside Dr – 3000 Feet North of SR-79	112.5
5	5	Palomar Mountain	East Grade Rd - East of Mile Marker 6.4	82
6	5	Palomar Mountain	Crestline Rd - East of East Grade Rd	212.5
7	2	Alpine	South Grade Rd - North of Mile Marker 43.3	138
8	5	Rainbow	Rainbow Heights Rd - South of Rainbow Crest Rd	250

Prior to the start of construction, notifications such as mailers, door hanger notices, social media postings, and signage that describe construction activities will be provided in the primary languages spoken in respective communities as determined through the United States Census Tract data. During construction, traffic control devices will be in place to limit impacts to the community and traveling public and will always allow vehicle access. County staff will be on-site throughout the duration of each guardrail project and will be available to respond to any project-related inquiries from the public. This project will be constructed within the public right-of-way. Plans for this project are complete, and the project is ready to be advertised.

This is a request to establish appropriations and approve the advertisement and subsequent award of a construction contract to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder for the replacement and repair of segments of guardrail at eight sites in the communities of Rincon, Pala Mesa, Fallbrook, Valley Center, Palomar, Rainbow, Alpine, and Descanso Pine Valley and Bonsall on County-maintained roads. If this item is approved today, the construction is estimated to begin in summer 2027 and be completed by spring 2028. The total project cost, including design, environmental review, and construction is estimated at \$1,241,590 and consists of \$471,590 for design, inspection, and environmental review and \$770,000 for construction. The total cost includes a 20% contingency for unforeseen or unexpected costs that may arise during construction. The funding sources are the Highway Safety Improvement Program, a federal grant program administered by Caltrans (\$859,262) and available prior year Road Fund fund balance (\$382,328).

This project is being approved with an anticipated appropriation that includes additional HSIP funding the County anticipates receiving from Caltrans for construction. If this additional funding is not forthcoming or a lower amount than expected is received, DPW will reevaluate the guardrail locations and proceed to award a construction contract that covers as many locations as possible with available funding.

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ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

Section 15301 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines exempts from CEQA review the “operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use.” This includes the maintenance of existing highways, streets, sidewalks, gutters, bicycle lanes, and pedestrian trails. The key consideration in determining whether this exemption applies is whether the project involves “negligible or no expansion of existing or former use.” The proposed project consists of the award of a contract for maintenance activities consisting of guardrail repair and replacement within existing County-maintained right-of-way. Therefore, the project is categorically exempt in accordance with Section 15301 of the CEQA Guidelines because it involves the maintenance of existing infrastructure involving no expansion of existing use. Due to the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) grant funds, the project was also reviewed under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and received a Categorical Exclusion on March 24, 2025.

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 Maps – Culvert locations within the communities of Paula-Pauma, Fallbrook Valley Center, Palomar, Rainbow, Alpine, and Descanso