



AGENDA REPORT


TO: Jestin D. Johnson,
City Administrator

FROM: Daniel Hamilton
Chief Resilience Officer

SUBJECT: Acceptance Of Funding for Sea
Level Rise and Groundwater Intrusion Analysis

DATE: May 20, 2025

City Administrator Approval


Jestin Johnson (May 27, 2025 15:31 PDT)

Date: **May 27, 2025**

RECOMMENDATION

Staff Recommends City Council Adopt A Resolution Authorizing The City Administrator To Accept And Appropriate the Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant In The Amount Of Two Hundred and Sixty Thousand Dollars (\$260,000) To Fund City Analysis and Engagement Of Port-Led Sea Level Rise And Ground Water Intrusion Modeling.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Approval of the proposed resolution will authorize the City Administrator to proceed with a collaborative effort with the Port of Oakland to measure, plan for, and mitigate impacts related to flooding from rising water levels associated with groundwater intrusion. These activities further the implementation of the City's Equitable Climate Action Plan (ECAP) and support needed improvements to the City's stormwater management system. As ocean levels continue to rise as a result of climate change, flooding is expected to increase not only from overtopping of waterfront infrastructure such as levees and sea walls, but also from groundwater intrusion resulting in percolation of subterranean water up through soils. This funding acceptance will support a broader City and Port collaboration to better understand the potential for this type of flooding, as well as protecting critical transportation infrastructure vulnerable to these impacts.

BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

On July 28, 2020, the City Council adopted the [2030 Equitable Climate Action Plan](#) via [Resolution 88267 C.M.S.](#), consisting of 40 actions to equitably reduce greenhouse gas emissions across Oakland by more than 60 percent. The ECAP organizes climate projects into seven categories, with the Adaptation category hosting actions that ensure the city's infrastructure, services, and systems can change to reflect environmental and social conditions likely to result from a changing climate. Three of these actions specifically relate to the waterfront areas of Oakland, where rising sea levels have the potential to impact the community in a variety of ways. These actions are:

- Action A-3: Fund & Implement Citywide Vulnerability Assessment & Comprehensive Adaptation Plan
- Action A-5: Identify and Reduce Financial Risks from Climate Change
- Action A-6: Expand and Protect Green Infrastructure & Biodiversity

On September 26, 2023, the City Council adopted the [General Plan Safety Element](#) via Resolution [89907 C.M.S.](#), which included a Climate Vulnerability Assessment that identified additional unstudied risks associated with critical infrastructure and the role of groundwater intrusion on lowland flooding.

Taken together, these two pieces of legislation documented the Council's intent to protect vulnerable people and infrastructure from impacts related to sea level rise, and to increase the City's understanding of these impacts to ensure adequate mitigation and adaptation to associated risks.

ANALYSIS AND POLICY ALTERNATIVES

The Oakland shoreline is vulnerable to coastal inundation and rising groundwater, and contamination as a result of rising sea levels and liquefaction in earthquakes. These climate induced hazards will put critical infrastructure at risk, damage habitat, and further burden already vulnerable communities. In order to coordinate adaptation among the impacted cities, special districts, service providers, and communities, Oakland helped organize and become part of the Oakland Alameda Adaptation Committee (OAAC), a coalition of shoreline communities and stakeholders working to co-create a coordinated and inclusive future-looking action plan and sub-regional organizational structure to accelerate sea level rise adaptation, protect and restore water quality, recreation and habitat, and promote community resilience. The City of Oakland has participated in the OAAC effort since its inception in 2022 and has coordinated much of its work on sea level rise through this partnership.

The OAAC agencies have utilized this forum to pursue a variety of grants over the past three years to develop funding to assess, model, and mitigate or adapt to rising water levels. These partnerships have resulted in several successful efforts, including State funding to reduce flood risk in the Webster and Posey tubes, develop and refine project designs for flood-prone areas, including Columbia Gardens and Estuary Park, and coordinate improvements to Port areas at the Oakland International Airport and Seaport.

The proposed grant of \$3 million to fund analysis and modeling of groundwater intrusion potential in Oakland as a result of rising sea levels, along with the community engagement to ensure voices of frontline communities are considered in the process, would be unlikely to be funded via alternative means in the City and Port's current budget climate. City and Port staff collaborated on this proposal as part of the ongoing OAAC work to address sea level rise along the Oakland estuary to build on work completed over the past several years, and to maximize revenue generation to address the challenges on this issue.

Grant funding is proposed to be used to fund a portion of a City Administrator Analyst position over the three-year grant term, in addition to support for specific engagement activities. The position funding will help coordinate the engagement activities with those of concurrent City efforts, including General Plan Phase II engagement, Regional Shoreline Adaptation Plan development, and Stormwater Master Plan development. Coordination is essential to ensure that frontline communities are consulted, and that engagement results are effectively integrated across the Plans and processes.

Staff currently has no alternative funding approaches to complete the work. It is likely that the Project would proceed under Port of Oakland leadership if this Resolution were not passed by the Council, with community engagement outsourced to a consulting firm without City coordination or involvement. Additional funding would also have to be pursued and won to ensure the continuation of the affected City Administrator Analyst position.

Adoption of the proposed resolution advances the Citywide Priority of **vibrant, sustainable infrastructure** by increasing capacity and resilience for critical public infrastructure in flood-prone areas of Oakland.

FISCAL IMPACT

The proposed grant would direct \$260,000 of funding from CalTrans to the City for use in staffing and support for community engagement and analysis of ground water intrusion impacts to projected sea level rise. No matching funds are required, and this represents a positive fiscal impact for the City.

PUBLIC OUTREACH / INTEREST

This grant proposal builds on a considerable amount of public engagement done through the OAAC partnership over the past three years, as well as that conducted in the 2030 Equitable Climate Action Plan and the General Plan Safety Element. This proposed grant will provide for follow-through on commitments made from these adopted Plans, and will fund additional engagement opportunities for residents and workers in impacted areas.

COORDINATION

Staff from Oakland Public Works (Watershed Division and Project Delivery Division), the City Administrator's Office / Sustainability and Resilience Division, and the Planning and Building Department (PBD) have coordinated in scoping the project and crafting a preliminary Agreement with the Port of Oakland. The Agreement was reviewed by the City Attorney and the Finance Department Budget Bureau.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Economic: Acceptance of these funds will allow for better information and analysis to protect vulnerable and critical infrastructure in low-lying areas of Oakland. The use of grant funding to complete this work will ensure that no general-purpose funding is required.

Environmental: This analysis, community engagement, and planning work will help the City better identify potential hazards related to flooding, protect vulnerable people and infrastructure, and further the City's flood protection and climate adaptation goals as stated in the City's Equitable Climate Action Plan.

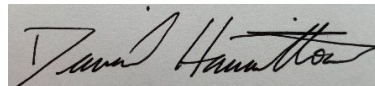
Race & Equity: The project will have positive, if minor, effects on overall racial equity in the City. The bulk of the areas for analysis and planning, and the focus of engagement, are in the flatland areas of Oakland, with higher representation of black, brown, and indigenous residents than the City as a whole. The approach to community engagement to be implemented is also based on the Racial Equity Impact Assessment and Implementation Guide of the City's Equitable Climate Action Plan.

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Staff Recommends City Council Adopt A Resolution Authorizing The City Administrator To Accept And Appropriate the Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant In The Amount Of Two Hundred and Sixty Thousand Dollars (\$260,000) To Fund City Analysis and Engagement Of Port-Led Sea Level Rise And Ground Water Intrusion Modeling.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Daniel Hamilton, Chief Resilience Officer, at (510) 238-6179.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel Hamilton", is centered below the text "Respectfully submitted,".

Daniel Hamilton
Chief Resilience Officer