



County of Monterey

Item No.

Board Report

Board of Supervisors
Chambers
168 W. Alisal St., 1st Floor
Salinas, CA 93901

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- a. Support and accept the projects recommended by the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC) North Monterey County Steering Committee; and
- b. Authorize County staff to schedule implementation of these projects.

RECOMMENDATION:

- a. Support and accept the projects recommended by the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC) North Monterey County Steering Committee; and
- b. Authorize County staff to schedule implementation of these projects.

SUMMARY:

As part of the North Monterey County Safe Routes to School Plan ("Plan") the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC), the County of Monterey Department of Public Works, Facilities and Parks, the County Health Department, Ecology Action, and the Center for Community Advocacy (CCA) have partnered to implement a Participatory Budgeting (PB) process to develop and immediately fund a list of Active Transportation Projects for five community areas in North Monterey County. Through this PB process, TAMC and its partners, including Health Department staff, organized a Steering Committee of community leaders who guided and supported the effort over approximately nine months. TAMC has funding for these projects, some of which are on County roadways, and the TAMC Steering Committee is requesting Board support of said projects.

DISCUSSION:

The Transportation Agency for Monterey County, Monterey County Public Works and Health Departments, Ecology Action, and the Center for Community Advocacy (CCA) have partnered to develop the North Monterey County Safe Routes to School Plan ("Plan"). The two-year planning process will identify barriers to safe access to ten public schools in North Monterey County and recommend infrastructure and non-infrastructure improvements.

Recommendations included in the Plan are designed to help address school-based traffic congestion and improve student health by fostering increased biking, walking, bus trips, and carpooling around public schools in Pajaro, Las Lomas, Prunedale, Castroville, and other areas of North County.

As part of this planning effort, TAMC chose to implement a Participatory Budgeting (PB) process, a democratic process where community members vote to decide how public funds are spent. TAMC recognized that while planning efforts are critical for securing future funding, it can often take years before funds are awarded and construction begins. To address this, TAMC will immediately fund "quick-build" active transportation projects through a PB process.

The North Monterey County Safe Routes to Schools planning process kicked off in spring 2024 and community outreach began in fall 2024. The planning team conducted walking audits at each of the 10 schools, gave presentations at parent meetings, and distributed an online parent survey. Alta Planning + Design, the consultant for the project, used the list of identified needs and safety issues to develop infrastructure and non-infrastructure recommendations around each school. In spring 2025, the planning team shared the recommendations lists at parent meetings to get feedback from parents and school staff.

Starting in May 2024, TAMC and their partners from Ecology Action and the Health Department helped form and facilitate a Participatory Budgeting Steering Committee made up of North County parents, residents, school staff, and community advocates. TAMC is providing up to \$1,000,000 to implement the projects that received the most votes and are recommended by the Steering Committee.

The following process was used to implement Participatory Budgeting in North Monterey County:

1. Creating the Ballot: The North Monterey County Steering Committee, in coordination with the planning team, decided on the structure of the ballot, developed a budget for each community in North County, and developed proposals for the community to vote on.

2. Election Outreach: the Steering Committee provided input on the best ways to get the word out about the election and took the lead on election outreach. Bilingual posters, fliers, social media posts, and videos were developed to promote the election. Steering Committee members attended the Día del Niño event hosted by the North Monterey County Unified School District to promote the election, as well as other school and community events across North County.

3. Voting: The community was given two weeks (April 27th - May 10th) to vote on their favorite safety improvement projects. Everyone aged 12 and over who lives, works, or has kids in school in North Monterey County was eligible to vote, with no identification required. Voting took place online and at in-person voting stations at each school, the Prunedale and Castroville Libraries, and Casa de La Cultura in Watsonville, and at community events and tabling locations.

4. Election Results: the winning projects were reviewed by the Steering Committee at their final meeting, and the Committee recommends that these projects be approved by the Board of Supervisors for funding. Election results may be found in Attachment 4.

Ballot Structure and Election Results:

Since North Monterey County is a large area that includes several communities, the Steering Committee's first decision was how to structure the ballot. The Committee decided that funds should be shared between different areas of North County, and decided to divide North County into the following five communities:

- Pajaro (includes areas around Pajaro Middle School and Ohlone Elementary)
- Las Lomas (includes areas around Hall Elementary)

- Prunedale (includes areas around Prunedale Elementary and Central Bay High School)
- Echo Valley/Elkhorn (includes areas around Echo Valley and Elkhorn Elementaries)
- Castroville (includes the areas around North Monterey County Middle School, North Monterey County High School, and Castroville Elementary)

The next question was how to divide \$1,000,000 in funding between these five communities. The Steering Committee agreed to divide the funds based on the relative needs in each community, and to use data to quantify those needs. The Committee approved the following criteria to measure needs:

- Number of students who live in each community
- Income as measured by percentage of students who qualify for Free & Reduced Program Meals (by school)
- Number of English language learners (elementary & middle schools only)
- Number of homeless students
- Presence of existing bike lanes and sidewalks
- Current infrastructure safety projects
- Presence of streetlights
- Presence of school signage
- Number of MST bus routes
- Number of traffic collisions within community
- Traffic volumes on streets near schools

The Steering Committee also decided on the relative importance of each criterion and how many points it should be worth. The final scoring criteria, scores for each community, and data on each score are available in Attachment 2.

Once the scoring criteria was finalized, each community was evaluated and given a score, which was used to determine the budget. The final budget for each community is shown below.

<u>COMMUNITY</u>	<u>SCHOOL NAMES</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>% OF TOTAL</u>	<u>BUDGET</u>
Echo Valley & Elkhorn	Echo Valley/Elkhorn Elementaries	70	22%	\$218,750
Las Lomas	Hall Elementary	67.5	21%	\$210,938
Pajaro	Ohlone Elementary & Pajaro Middle	67.5	21%	\$210,938
Prunedale	Prunedale Elementary & Central Bay High	60	19%	\$187,500
Castroville	Castroville Elementary, North Monterey County	55	17%	\$171,875

Middle & High School

Total	0	0%	\$1,000,000
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After the budget was finalized, the Steering Committee reviewed the project list for each community and chose projects for the ballot. This included projects on County roadways and projects on school district property. The Committee grouped projects into two or three proposals for each of the five communities that people could choose between. The English and Spanish ballots, including proposals for each community, may be found in Attachment 3.

In total, 999 votes were received in the election, including 260 digital ballots and 739 paper ballots. The majority of voters (541) completed a Spanish ballot, and 458 voters completed an English ballot. Election results, including the winning projects that are recommended for funding may be found in Attachment 4.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT/COMMITTEE ACTIONS:

The Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC), the County of Monterey Department of Public Works, Facilities and Parks, the County Health Department, Ecology Action, and the Center for Community Advocacy (CCA) have partnered to develop the North Monterey County Safe Routes to School Plan and the proposed project list.

FINANCING:

The Transportation Agency for Monterey County is providing up to \$1,000,000 to implement projects that come out of the participatory budgeting process. The total budget for projects located on school district property is \$218,500. The total budget for projects located on County roadways, or studies that would be implemented by the County, is \$781,500, which would cover staff and project costs.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS:

The projects would enhance safety and comfort for students and families to get to and from schools in the subject North Monterey County communities.

- ☒ Well-Being and Quality of Life
- ☒ Sustainable Infrastructure for the Present and Future
- ☒ Safe and Resilient Communities
- ☐ Diverse and Thriving Economy
- ☐ Administrative

Prepared by: Chad Alinio, Senior Civil Engineer, 755-4937

Approved by: Elsa Mendoza Jimenez, Director of Health Services, 755-4526

Approved by: Randell Ishii, Director of Public Works, Facilities, and Parks

Attachment(s):

Board Report

Final funding proposal

English & Spanish Ballots

Election results