



STAFF REPORT – CITY COUNCIL MEETING

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Netra Khatri, City Engineer

PREPARER: Mara Grow, Administrative Specialist

DATE: October 1, 2025

TITLE: Award a Contract in the Amount of \$300,000 to Smith Group, Inc. for Professional Services for Planning, Community Outreach and Preliminary Concept Design for the Reconnect Arcata Project.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Council:

- 1) Award a contract in the amount of \$300,000 to Smith Group, Inc., for professional services for planning, community outreach and preliminary concept design for the Reconnect Arcata Project; and
- 2) Authorize the City Manager to execute all applicable documents.

INTRODUCTION:

The City of Arcata was selected to receive funding for this project through the California Air Resources Board – California Climate Investments (CARB/CCI) via Caltrans, for the initial phase of the *Reconnecting Communities: Highways to Boulevards State Pilot Program (RC:H2B)*. This program was established to plan for and fund the conversion of underutilized highways in California into multi-modal corridors that reconnect communities divided by transportation infrastructure. The program seeks to address the historical negative impacts of highway construction through community-based transportation planning, design, demolition, and/or reconstruction of city streets, parks, or other infrastructure. The project in Arcata intends to serve as a model for “reconnecting communities” impacted by highway bifurcation in the North Coast region and across California. Project locations are depicted in Exhibit A.

BACKGROUND:

Due to the State’s ongoing budget shortfall, funding for this project has been delayed. It has now been more than 18 months since the City was selected and the project was announced to the public. The community is eager to see progress and ready to move forward.

City staff continue to pursue state and federal grant opportunities in partnership with Caltrans, and we remain hopeful for future success. To maintain momentum and demonstrate the City’s commitment, staff recommend allocating \$500,000 from the General Fund to initiate the Community Readiness and Planning phase of the project. This early investment will lay the foundation for long-term safety and connectivity improvements while positioning the City more competitively for future funding opportunities.

At this time, staff recommend awarding \$300,000 of the \$500,000 allocation to begin work immediately, with the intent to add the remaining \$200,000 to the contract in approximately nine months. During that period, the City expects to learn whether any pending grant applications have been awarded. If successful, grant funds could cover the balance of the work, reducing the need for additional General Fund contributions.

To further optimize the project budget, we will encourage the consultant to coordinate certain tasks with the City’s existing on-call consultants (CivicPossible and FlashVote).

The Community Readiness and Planning phase activities will include identifying key partners, facilitating discussions with regional stakeholders, reviewing past efforts to improve transportation safety, and analysis of existing conditions. Deliverables will include preparation of a community engagement plan, a stakeholder map, a fiscal strategy, and a conceptual Project Master Plan and Report to serve as the framework for advancing the project into future phases. Ultimately, the project will result in a prioritized, tiered list of implementable projects that address the community’s most urgent safety and connectivity needs across all transportation modes.

DISCUSSION:

On May 23, 2025, the City issued a Request for Qualifications & Proposals (RFQP) seeking experienced transportation planning and engineering consultant teams with expertise in multimodal design, planning, and outreach to help prepare a community-driven plan. The RFQP was released under the assumption that the City would receive state funds for this program. However, upon learning of a delay in funding, the City issued an addendum notifying proposers of the revised project budget of \$500,000.

The City received four qualified proposals, which were reviewed, evaluated, and ranked by a selection committee consisting of City staff and staff from Cal Poly Humboldt; a regional Caltrans representative also reviewed the proposals and participated in the selection committee’s discussions but did not participate in the evaluation or ranking process. The top-ranked consultant, Smith Group + GHD, was invited to participate in an interview process.

Smith Group’s cost proposal for the project is included in Attachment B, and their statement of qualifications and technical proposal can be viewed online [HERE](#). The City’s project team plans to work with Smith Group to refine the scope of work prior to executing the contract to ensure it adequately addresses the anticipated needs of the project.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (CEQA):

Environmental review will occur later during the next phase of the project, Project Approval and Environmental Documentation (PA&ED).

BUDGET/FISCAL IMPACT:

The contract amount was initially included in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025–26 budget based on the anticipated grant award. However, due to the State budget shortfall, the City has not yet received the grant funds. Staff therefore recommend allocating \$300,000 from the General Fund to award the contract and initiate the project.

Project	Account	Amount	Notes
Reconnecting Arcata	101-00-00-33000	\$300,000	General Fund Unassigned Fund Balance

RECOMMENDED COUNCIL ACTION:

1. Receive a staff report.
2. Receive public comment.
3. Motion to award a contract in the amount of \$300,000 to Smith Group, Inc., for professional services for planning, community outreach and preliminary concept design for the Reconnect Arcata Project; and authorize the City Manager to execute all applicable documents.

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Project Locations Map (PDF)
- B. Smith Group + GHD Cost Proposal (PDF)