



City of Arts & Innovation

City Council Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL DATE: MARCH 3, 2026

FROM: CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE WARDS: 3 AND 7

SUBJECT: AUTHORIZATION OF A GRANT APPLICATION TO THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026 BETTER UTILIZING INVESTMENTS TO LEVERAGE DEVELOPMENT FOR A TOTAL PROJECT COST OF \$7,500,000 INCLUDING A 20% REQUIRED LOCAL MATCH OF \$1,500,000

ISSUE:

Authorize the submittal of a grant application requesting up to \$7.5 million in grant funding for a Fiscal Year 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Program offered by the United States Department of Transportation to construct improvements surrounding the Riverside Airport. The total project cost is estimated at \$7.5 million with a grant funded component of \$6.0 million and a required 20% local match consisting approximately of \$1.5 million City match.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the City Council:

1. Authorize the submittal of a Fiscal Year 2026 BUILD grant application to the United States Department of Transportation for a total estimated project cost of \$7.5 million (including approximately \$1.5 million in required City match funds), to construct improvements at Riverside Airport's interior parking lot, roadway improvements on: Flight Road, Airport Drive, Gemende Drive, Doolittle Avenue, and Central Avenue, and various traffic operations and safety improvements surrounding the Riverside Airport; and
2. Authorize the City Manager, or designee, to sign any grant-related documents, including making minor and non-substantive changes as necessary.

BACKGROUND:

Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant program is a competitive federal grant administered by the U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) to fund surface transportation infrastructure projects with significant local or regional impacts. Originally established in 2009 under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act as the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recover (TIGER) the program was renamed to BUILD in 2018.

The BUILD grants aim to support planning or constructing surface transportation infrastructure projects that will improve safety; environmental sustainability; quality of life; mobility and community connectivity; economic competitiveness and opportunity including tourism; state of good repair; partnership and collaboration; and innovation. The BUILD Program supports surface transportation components of an airport project eligible for assistance under Part B of Subtitle VII of title 49, United States Code. Under this section, roadways immediately adjacent to airports and infrastructure supporting airports including airport parking lots are eligible for funding.

BUILD grants may range from small local improvements to regionally significant transportation investments and agencies are encouraged to consider both construction and planning grants. The minimum award size for Urban Capital Projects is \$5 million and requires a minimum 20% local match. In Fiscal Year 2025, 815 eligible applications requested \$10 billion and 30 projects (3.7%) were awarded totaling \$488 million across 27 states.

The Fiscal Year 2026 BUILD grant application submittal has a deadline of February 24, 2026 at 5:00 PM Eastern Time.

DISCUSSION:

The City Manager's Office is requesting authorization from the City Council to submit a grant application requesting a total of up to \$6.0 million in USDOT FY 2026 BUILD grant funding. The local match of \$1.5 million would be funded by the Public Works Department's Pavement Management Program as the grant is recommending improving multiple roadways surrounding the airport. The roadway projects and interior parking lot improvements would support the airport's existing flight schools, planned growth, Learning Institute for Flight Technology (LIFT) Initiative, and traffic and safety operations at and near the airport.

Riverside Airport traces its roots back to the early 1920s, when local aviation pioneer Roman Warren, known as the "Cowboy Aviator," established a small landing field near the Santa Ana River. Warren initially used a 15-acre pasture with a 900-foot runway for his surplus JN-4 aircraft, marking the beginning of Riverside's civil aviation era. By the mid-20th century, the airport—then known as Riverside Arlington Airport—expanded its facilities. In 1956, Runway 9/27 was paved, enabling larger aircraft operations. Soon after, Bonanza Air Lines began scheduled flights, later joined by Air West, offering service to destinations like Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and Palm Springs. Through the 1970s, Golden West Airlines operated Twin Otter flights to LAX, reinforcing Riverside's role in regional connectivity.

Riverside Airport is now the busiest FAA Federal Contract Tower airport in California, ranking 116th nationwide in operations. It supports emergency services, air ambulance flights, and firefighting missions, while also fostering community engagement through events which highlights its economic and educational impact on the Inland Empire. Staff are currently working with consultants on the Airport's Master Plan and an Economic Impact Study to provide the City with comprehensive long-term strategy framework that will guide the physical, social, and economic development for this critical regional facility.

The Interim Public Works Director concurs with the recommendations in this report.

FISCAL IMPACT:

If awarded, the total estimated fiscal impact of this recommendation is up to \$7,500,000, which is comprised of \$6,000,000 in USDOT grant funds, and an additional \$1,500,000 local matching

funds from available funding to complete the BUILD infrastructure improvements as listed in Table 1.

Table 1 – Project Scope and Costs:

Location	Scope of Work	Total Project Cost
Airport Interior Parking Lot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repave Parking Lot • 10 New Light Fixtures • 7 New Light Poles • Landscaping Improvements • Curb & Gutter Improvements 	\$1.425 Million
Flight Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repave Road • Signing and Striping Improvements • Pedestrian Ramp Improvements 	\$402,000
Airport Drive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repave Road • Signing and Striping Improvements • Pedestrian Ramp Improvements 	\$1.085 Million
Gemende Drive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repave Road • Signing and Striping Improvements 	\$1.215 Million
Doolittle Avenue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Furnish & Install Concrete Railing (Type K) 	\$220,000
Central Avenue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repave Road • Signing and Striping Improvements • High Friction Surface Treatment 	\$450,000
Traffic Improvements at Airport Dr – Monroe St – Arlington Ave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AI Based Advance Video Detection Camera System • Audible Pedestrian Push Button System • High Visibility Crosswalks • Transit Signal Priority System • Advance Traffic Controller Cabinet • Battery Back-Up System 	\$153,000
Traffic Improvements at Airport Dr at Gemende Dr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flashing LED Stop Signs • High Visibility Crosswalks 	\$34,000
Traffic Improvements on Airport Dr between Central Ave and Gemende Dr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solar Powered Radar Speed Feedback Sign • Solar Powered Rapid Rectangular Flashing Beacon System 	\$110,000
Traffic Improvements at Central Ave at Fremont St	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LED Flashing Chevron Signs • Guardrail 	\$120,000
Traffic Improvements at Central Ave at Wilderness Ave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LED Flashing Chevron Signs 	\$50,000
Traffic Improvements on Central Ave between Wilderness Ave and Fremont St	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solar Powered Radar Speed Feedback Sign 	\$50,000
Traffic Improvements at Flight Rd at 6961 Flight Rd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Visibility Crosswalks 	\$64,000

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solar Powered Rapid Rectangular Flashing Beacon System 	
Incidental Items		\$620,000
Total Construction Cost		\$5,998,000
Construction Contingencies (15%)		\$899,700
Construction Engineering, Survey, Inspection & Administration (10%)		\$599,800
Total Project Cost		\$7,497,500

If awarded, staff will return to the City Council to receive and appropriate funding and will make a recommendation for allocating the local match funding requirement.

Prepared by: Daniel Prather, Airport Manager
 Approved by: Nathan Mustafa, Interim Public Works Director
 Certified as to availability of funds: Julie Nemes, Interim Finance Director
 Approved by: Gilbert Hernandez, Interim Assistant City Manager
 Approved as to form: Rebecca McKee-Reibold, Interim City Attorney

Attachment: Riverside Airport BUILD Grant Project Locations