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El Paso County Agenda Item Details

Item Title:	Economic Development - National Parks Service Mission Trail Technical Assistance Program Service Extension Request Letter (2025-0206)
Submitted By:	Roberto Ransom, Director
Department:	Economic Development
Department Phone Number:	915-546-2177
Subject:	Approve and authorize the County Judge to sign a letter formally requesting another year of services from the National Parks Service for the technical assistance they are currently providing on the "El Paso Mission Trail: Heritage on the Move" project. No funding is associated with this request. (Contract No. 2025-0206)
Background:	<p>Recent Background: The purpose of this letter is to formally request another year of services from the National Parks Service for the technical assistance they are currently providing on the "El Paso Mission Trail: Heritage on the Move" project.</p> <p>Original Background: The National Park Service – Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program (RTCA) supports community-led natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation projects across the nation. This partnership assists local communities in realizing their conservation and outdoor recreation vision and goals by providing a broad range of services and skills. No monetary grants are made.</p> <p>On May 15, 2024, the City of El Paso and El Paso Chamber of Commerce were awarded for their application seeking technical assistance through this program for the Spring 2024 through Summer 2025 project cycle. The project, titled History and Developing Infrastructure and Assets for the Mission Trail, was awarded with the intent to provide assistance focused on the Mission Trail in developing transportation, safety and equitable access infrastructure and researching possibilities for a UNESCO designation. Specific outcomes include opportunities for community planning and engagement to improve physical and emotional connections with the Mission Trail in Ysleta del</p>

Sur Pueblo, Socorro, and San Elizario.

The City has approached County Economic Development staff to partner in being a recipient of this project award. The City will retain its role as the fiscal agent and is responsible for allocating three staff members. There are no performance reports associated with this program, as it focuses on technical assistance (no funding involved). The County will serve as the lead jurisdiction under the City (who is the project's fiscal agent). Staff is seeking direction from the Commissioner's Court regarding this opportunity.

Fiscal Impact:

Fiscal Impact Historical
N/A

Fiscal Impact Projected
N/A

Long Account Number: Amount:

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Budget or Unbudgeted Match:

Recommendation:

Approve and authorize the County Judge to sign a letter formally requesting another year of services from the National Parks Service for the technical assistance they are currently providing on the "El Paso Mission Trail: Heritage on the Move" project. No funding is associated with this request. (Contract No. 2025-0206).

Prior Action:

6/10/24: Discuss and take appropriate action regarding the County's participation as the lead agency for the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program Grant Opportunity secured by the City of El Paso and El Paso Chamber of Commerce.

Strategic Plan:

Goal:

3. Increase Tourism

Objective:

3.3 Implementation of Mission Trails Master Plan

Strategic Plan Information:

N/A

**Estimated Time Needed
For This Item:**

El Paso County

March 10, 2025

Gibran Lule-Hurtado Acting Regional Program Manager
NPS Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program
Serving Interior Regions 6, 7, & 8
12795 W. Alameda Parkway Lakewood, CO 80228

Dear Mr. Lule-Hurtado,

Subject: Request for Extension of RTCA Technical Assistance for the Mission Trail Project

I hope this letter finds you well. On May 15, 2024, the City of El Paso and El Paso Chamber of Commerce were awarded for their participation seeking technical assistance through this program for the Spring 2024 through summer 2025. Thereafter, the City of El Paso approached El Paso County's Economic Development Staff to partner as recipient of this project, which was approved by the County Commissioners Court on June 10, 2024.

On behalf of El Paso County, I would like to express our sincere gratitude for the National Park Service (NPS) Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program's support in advancing the "El Paso Mission Trail: Heritage on the Move" project. Your team's collaboration has been instrumental in our progress thus far.

As we continue working toward achieving our project goals—specifically, developing transportation, safety, and equitable access infrastructure and securing state and federal legislative support for a UNESCO designation—we have identified several critical tasks that remain pending. To ensure the successful completion of these objectives, we respectfully request an extension of RTCA's technical assistance¹ for an additional year through the 2026 fiscal year.

The following tasks are pending and essential to the completion of our project:

1. Plan a Complete Streets Workshop/Meeting.
2. Develop an engagement process to connect communities to the trail.
3. Support project partners with the implementation of the community engagement process.
4. Identify participants for a UNESCO panel.
5. Conduct outreach to NPS staff, including experts from the San Antonio Missions, Office of International Affairs, National Historic Trails, and UTSA Historic Preservation Director William Dupont, to gain insights into the UNESCO designation process.
6. Facilitate discussions on the pros and cons of a UNESCO designation.

¹ Approved by the El Paso County Commissioner's Court on June 10, 2024 Item 9.A: Approve to direct staff to proceed with participating in the Rivers, Trails, And Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program and join the City of El Paso and El Paso Chamber of commerce as an award recipient.

We believe that an extension of RTCA's assistance will not only support the completion of these tasks but also strengthen the long-term impact of our project by fostering deeper community engagement and enhancing our strategic approach to achieving a UNESCO designation.

The Mission Trail Alliance team and local partners have been historically expected to contribute staff time, meeting space, and financial or technical support to accomplish project objectives and to that end the County has and remains committed to providing staff time and meeting space.

Thank you for considering this request. We are eager to continue collaborating with your team and look forward to the opportunity to bring this project to fruition with RTCA's continued support². Please do not hesitate to reach out if you need any additional information.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your positive response.

Sincerely,

Ricardo Samaniego
El Paso County Judge

² The El Paso County Economic Development Department is prepared to support these efforts by continuing to provide the types of support it has in the past. Such as providing staff time to work on this initiative and secured meeting spaces here at the Courthouse and at Los Portales related to this program.