



AGENDA ITEM NO.

COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: May 8, 2018

Date: May 2, 2018

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Thomas K. Mattson, Public Works Director

Subject: Adoption of Initial Study and Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration of Environmental Impact for the California Redwood Coast-Humboldt County (ACV) Airport Microgrid Project

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Review the attached Initial Study and Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration for the California Redwood Coast-Humboldt County (ACV) Airport Microgrid Project;
2. Approve, and authorize the Chair of the Board to execute, the attached resolution adopting the Initial Study and Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration for the California Redwood Coast-Humboldt County (ACV) Airport Microgrid Project; and
3. Direct the Department of Public Works to file a Notice of Determination with the Humboldt County Clerk-Recorder's Office.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

Aviation Fund (3530381); The California Energy Commission may provide grant funding to the Schatz Energy Research Center at Humboldt State University to implement the California Redwood Coast-Humboldt County (ACV) Airport Microgrid Project.

Prepared by Hank Seemann, Deputy-Director

CAO Approval

REVIEW:

Auditor _____ County Counsel TLFR Human Resources _____ Other _____

TYPE OF ITEM:

☒ Consent
☐ Departmental
☐ Public Hearing
☐ Other _____

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No. I-2

Meeting of: October 10, 2017

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT
Upon motion of Supervisor _____ Seconded by Supervisor _____

Ayes
Nays
Abstain
Absent

and carried by those members present, the Board hereby approves the recommended action contained in this Board report.

Dated: _____

By: _____

Kathy Hayes, Clerk of the Board

DISCUSSION:

The Humboldt County Department of Public Works (Public Works), Schatz Energy Research Center at Humboldt State University (SERC), Redwood Coast Energy Authority (RCEA) and Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) are collaborating to construct a 2.3-megawatt solar microgrid facility on approximately nine acres at the California Redwood Coast-Humboldt County Airport (ACV). The facility will include solar panels, an energy storage system, electric vehicle chargers and associated equipment. The facility will provide power to ACV and Coast Guard Air Station and export wholesale power into PG&E's electricity grid through RCEA's community choice aggregation program. The facility will be designed and constructed by SERC and operated by RCEA.

In the fall of 2017, SERC led the development of a \$5 million grant application to the California Energy Commission (CEC) to implement the ACV Airport Microgrid Project. On October 10, 2017, the County of Humboldt agreed to allow construction and operation of the microgrid facility at ACV and to serve as the lead agency for environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). On February 20, 2018, the CEC announced that the project was proposed for funding. The CEC will consider approval of the proposed award at its June 13, 2018 business meeting. Construction is expected to begin in the spring of 2019.

To comply with the provisions of CEQA, Public Works prepared an Initial Study to identify potentially significant environmental impacts associated with the project. The Initial Study identifies four mitigation measures that will collectively reduce environmental impacts to less-than-significant levels. The mitigation measures ensure that tree and vegetation removal do not impact nesting birds, provide protective measures for inadvertent discovery of cultural resources or human remains, and minimize impacts of groundborne vibrations and noise on adjacent residents. Based on the findings of the Initial Study, Public Works concluded that a Mitigated Negative Declaration of environmental impact is the appropriate determination for compliance with CEQA. The Initial Study and Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration are contained in Attachment 1. The public review period for the Initial Study and Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration was March 30, 2018, through April 30, 2018. A digital copy of the document was posted on the county's website, and hard copies were submitted to the State Clearinghouse for circulation to state agencies. Notification letters were sent to the owners of property contiguous to the Project area, and the Notice of Intent to adopt the Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration for the project was published in the Mad River Union.

One comment letter (Attachment 2) was received during the review period for the Initial Study and Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration. A response to comments prepared by Public Works is provided in Attachment 3.

Public Works believes the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration sufficiently address the potential environmental impacts associated with the project under CEQA, and recommends that the Board incorporate the four identified mitigation measures into the project. The Board of Supervisors is the decision-making body with the authority to adopt the Mitigated Negative Declaration under CEQA. Public Works recommends that the Board approve the attached resolution (Attachment 4) adopting the Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration for the project, and direct staff to file a Notice of Determination (Attachment 5) with the Humboldt County Clerk-Recorder's Office.

The CEC requires documentation of adoption of the Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration by approximately May 11, 2018, in order for the funding agreement to be approved. Therefore, adoption of the Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration is time-sensitive.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The cost for preparing the CEQA documentation for the project and paying the filing fee (total of approximately \$15,000) was funded by the Aviation Fund under the adopted Fiscal Year 2017-18 budget. The financial impact of the overall project will be discussed in the future when an agreement with SERC and RCEA is brought before the Board for review and approval.

The recommended actions conform to the Board of Supervisors' core role of providing for and maintaining infrastructure.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

Schatz Energy Research Center at Humboldt State University, Redwood Coast Energy Authority and the California Energy Commission

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Board could direct staff to prepare an Environmental Impact Report for the Project. This alternative is not recommended because Public Works believes there is substantial evidence to conclude that the environmental aspects of the project do not exceed the thresholds of significance for further review.
2. The Board could defer action. This alternative is not recommended because delay would result in the CEC not approving funding for the project.
3. The Board could decide not to approve the project. This alternative is not recommended because the identified benefits to the County from the project would be unrealized.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Initial Study and Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration
2. Comment letter pertaining to the Initial Study and Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration for the ACV Airport Microgrid Project
3. Response to comments pertaining to the Initial Study and Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration for the ACV Airport Microgrid Project
4. Resolution Adopting the Initial Study and Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration for the ACV Airport Microgrid Project
5. Notice of Determination regarding the ACV Airport Microgrid Project