



CITY OF SOLEDAD

STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: Direction Regarding Participation in a Proposed Congressional Directed Spending Request for South Monterey County Public Safety Technology and City's Potential Role as Fiscal Agent

TO: Honorable Mayor Velazquez and City Council

FROM: Megan Hunter, City Manager

THROUGH:

MEETING DATE: July 14, 2026

Recommendation

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Authorize the Mayor to sign the attached letter from Supervisor Lopez requesting a \$3 million Congressional Directed Spending (CDS) Request for South Monterey County Public Safety Technology; and
2. Provide direction on the City's participation in this request and proposed role as fiscal agent.

Executive Summary

Monterey County Supervisor Chris Lopez is coordinating a regional Congressional Directed Spending (CDS) request through Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren seeking \$3 million to improve public safety throughout South Monterey County. The proposal would establish a regional partnership among the Cities of Gonzales, Greenfield, King City, Soledad, and Monterey County to deploy public safety technology utilizing the Flock Safety platform. Under the proposal, the City of Soledad would serve as the regional fiscal administrator, receiving and administering federal grant funds on behalf of participating agencies while each jurisdiction maintains independent authority over its own contracts, policies, deployment locations, and operations. Staff is seeking direction on whether the Council authorizes the Mayor to sign the attached draft letter.

Background

South Monterey County law enforcement agencies continue to face increasing public safety demands while operating with limited staffing and financial resources. Criminal activity frequently crosses jurisdictional boundaries, making regional cooperation essential for effective investigations and emergency response. Supervisor Chris Lopez has proposed submitting a Congressional Directed Spending (CDS) request to secure federal funding for a coordinated public safety technology initiative benefiting South Monterey County.

The proposed regional partnership includes:

- Monterey County
- City of Gonzales
- City of Greenfield
- City of King
- City of Soledad

Rather than each jurisdiction independently seeking funding, the proposal establishes a coordinated regional approach that leverages economies of scale while preserving local governance and operational control. Supervisor Lopez has requested that the City of Soledad serve as the lead fiscal administrator because of the City's experience managing state and federal grants and its capacity to administer regional funding.

At this time, the City Council is not being asked to approve a grant agreement, purchase equipment, or enter into a contract with Flock Safety. Instead, the Council is being asked to authorize the Mayor to sign the CDS on behalf of Soledad and approval for the City to be identified as the fiscal agent.

Review & Analysis

This item is being presented to the City Council for policy direction because the Council has previously expressed concerns regarding the use of Flock Safety technology, particularly with respect to the sharing of data with out-of-state agencies and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Staff recognizes those concerns and is seeking direction before identifying the City of Soledad as the fiscal agent and participating jurisdiction in a proposed Congressional Directed Spending (CDS) request.

In recent months, the region has experienced a troubling increase in violent crime that has affected residents across jurisdictional boundaries. Most recently, the neighboring City of Greenfield experienced a tragic double homicide that claimed the life of a Soledad community member who was a devoted mother, local business owner, and youth dance instructor. Her death has had a significant impact beyond city boundaries and serves as a reminder that violence in one community affects the broader South County region.

The City of Soledad has also experienced several significant violent incidents within a short period. During May 2026 alone:

- A man was shot and killed in broad daylight while leaving a youth soccer game with his children, exposing families and young people to a serious act of violence.
- An armored vehicle was targeted in a violent armed robbery involving multiple suspects.
- Another resident was assaulted and hospitalized after suffering significant injuries.

Historically, Soledad has been recognized as a safe, close-knit community where families gather in parks, attend youth sporting events, and participate in community celebrations. It is concerning that murders and violent crimes are now occurring in broad daylight, during community events, and in the presence of children. These incidents devastate victims and their families and can erode the sense of safety that defines communities throughout South Monterey County.

Local law enforcement agencies have proactively invested in technology and regional partnerships; however, criminal activity continues to cross jurisdictional boundaries. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated regional responses supported by modern technology, effective information sharing, and strategic federal investment.

Congressional Directed Spending provides local governments with the opportunity to secure direct federal appropriations for projects that address significant community needs. Supervisor Chris Lopez is proposing a regional request to Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren for \$3 million to support a coordinated public safety technology initiative benefiting the Cities of Gonzales, Greenfield, King, Soledad, and Monterey County.

If awarded, the funding would provide for the purchase, installation, and operation of public safety technology over an initial three-year period. Eligible expenditures include license plate recognition (LPR) cameras, public safety video cameras, integration of existing camera systems into a unified cloud-based platform, investigative software, Drone-as-First-Responder technology, traffic analytics, artificial intelligence search capabilities, and the associated installation, maintenance, software licensing, and cloud storage necessary to operate the system. The proposal is intended to create a coordinated regional network while allowing each participating jurisdiction to determine its own operational needs, deployment locations, and governing policies.

Under the preliminary proposal, the City of Soledad would receive approximately \$400,000 in federal funding, exclusive of grant administration costs. The City's proposed deployment would include twelve (12) fixed LPR cameras, two (2) mobile Flex LPR cameras, sixteen (16) pan-tilt-zoom (PTZ) public safety cameras, two (2) Community Partnership cameras, and one (1) Drone-as-First-Responder system.

The proposal also identifies the City of Soledad as the regional fiscal administrator. Staff would recommend accepting this responsibility only if the grant includes sufficient funding to fully reimburse the City's administrative costs and staff time. As fiscal agent, the City would be responsible for executing grant agreements, administering grant funds, processing payments, preparing required financial reports, ensuring compliance with federal grant requirements, and coordinating with the participating agencies and the federal funding agency. Each participating jurisdiction would continue to be responsible for selecting deployment locations, entering into its own service agreements, operating and maintaining its equipment, adopting local policies governing the use of the technology, managing user access, and ensuring compliance with all applicable state and federal laws.

The proposal builds upon the strong cooperative relationships that already exist among South Monterey County law enforcement agencies. Residents regularly travel between Gonzales, Soledad, Greenfield, King City, and the unincorporated areas of Monterey County for employment, education, healthcare, shopping, and recreation. Likewise, criminal activity frequently crosses jurisdictional boundaries, making regional coordination essential. By pursuing this project as a regional partnership, participating agencies would improve investigative collaboration, enhance officer safety, maximize limited public safety resources, reduce duplication of technology investments, and strengthen interoperability during major incidents while maintaining local control over deployment and operations.

Staff also recognizes that the deployment of public safety technology must be balanced with the protection of civil liberties and the preservation of public trust. In response to concerns previously expressed by the City Council, the Council adopted amendments to the City's Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) Policy on March 18, 2026, to strengthen protections against the unauthorized release or sharing of ALPR data for immigration enforcement purposes. Corresponding revisions were also made to the Soledad Police Department's Lexipol Policy No. 470, which prohibits the use or sharing of ALPR information for civil immigration enforcement except as required by state or federal law. These policy changes reflect the City's commitment to ensuring that technology is used solely for legitimate public safety purposes while protecting the rights and privacy of community members.

The action requested at this meeting does not authorize the purchase or deployment of Flock Safety technology. Rather, it provides policy direction on whether the City should participate in the Congressional funding request and serve as the regional fiscal administrator should federal funding become available. Any future acceptance of grant funding, execution of contracts, or implementation of the project would require separate City Council review and approval at a public meeting.

Financial Considerations

There is no fiscal impact associated with authorizing the Mayor to sign the CDS request letter or allowing the City to be identified as the proposed fiscal agent, because any grant agreement, cooperative agreement, procurement, or contract would return to the City Council for separate review and approval. If Congress approves the \$3 million federal earmark, the City of Soledad's estimated allocation is approximately \$400,000, not including administration costs, which would fully fund the City's proposed deployment and associated software, maintenance, implementation, and cloud services for a three-year period.

Acceptance of any grant funding would require future City Council approval. The City would agree to serve as fiscal agent only if administrative costs and staff time are eligible for reimbursement through the earmark. If the Congressional funding request is not approved, the City would incur no financial obligation.

Strategic Plan Alignment

Participating in the CDS is consistent with Strategic Plan Objective 6.2.2 – Modernize technology to enhance the Police Department's capacity and more specifically upgrading camera systems by "transitioning to the Flock Safety platform to enhance investigative capacity and real-time response".

Alternatives

- Approve the staff recommendation and authorize the City to be identified as the proposed fiscal agent and participating jurisdiction in the Congressional Directed Spending request; or
- Authorize participation in the regional initiative but decline to serve as the fiscal agent; or
- Decline participation in the Congressional funding request; or
- Provide alternative direction to staff.

Planning/CEQA

This action is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378 because it consists solely of providing policy direction regarding a potential grant application and does not commit the City to a definite course of action that may result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable physical change in the environment.

Public Notice Requirements

None.

Attachment(s):

Draft South Monterey County Congressional Earmark Request