



## POGO PARK

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## – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –

### Richmond's Yellow Brick Road Project Wins \$6.2 Million State Grant

**Richmond, CA, November, 2015**—The city of Richmond secured a \$6.2 million Active Transportation Program (ATP) grant from the California Transportation Commission (CTC) to build the first leg of the Yellow Brick Road in Richmond's underserved Iron Triangle neighborhood.

Conceived of by local youth in 2008, the Yellow Brick Road (YBR) is envisioned to be a network of brightly stenciled, yellow bike and walking routes that connect key assets (schools, parks, churches, community centers, BART, Kaiser Hospital) of the Iron Triangle community together.

In a fiercely competitive statewide competition of 617 applications, the Yellow Brick Road proposal was 1 of only 86 projects selected by the CTC for funding. Richmond's \$6.2 million Yellow Brick Road grant was the third largest grant awarded in the State.

What set Richmond's Yellow Brick Road proposal apart was the level of participation by Iron Triangle residents to create a new transportation vision for their neighborhood. Pogo Park, a Richmond-based nonprofit that works with local residents to transform little-used city parks into vibrant play spaces for children, spearheaded the effort to write Richmond's winning ATP grant. The city of Richmond and transportation engineers Fehr & Peers helped Pogo Park assemble the key data needed to make the Yellow Brick Road grant a success.

The Yellow Brick Road was conceived by a grass-roots planning effort that involved hundreds of residents working in concert with city planners, community designers, health advocates and neighborhood activists over the past eight years.

The creation of the YBR is an answer to the poor and dangerous street conditions in the one-square-mile Iron Triangle neighborhood, one of the most under-served neighborhoods in California. In comparison with other Bay Area communities, bicyclists and pedestrians in the Iron Triangle have suffered a disproportionate rate of collisions with cars. According to Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System (SWIRTS) data, between 2008-2012 there were 50 incidents of vehicular collisions with cyclists and pedestrians in this neighborhood. Local residents and the Richmond Police Department believe the actual number is significantly higher due to many unreported incidents. Local residents often can only travel safely in the Iron Triangle by car rather than walking or biking due to the dangers of local streets.

Pogo Park, Fehr & Peers, and the city of Richmond worked closely together to complete the State's highly detailed, 300+-page application for funding for the Yellow Brick Road.

"This will have a tremendously positive impact for thousands of residents by transforming the neighborhood with a more open and inviting environment," said Mayor Tom Butt who's been following and supporting the project since its conception. "This project will connect disparate neighborhoods that have historically felt left behind, with innovative and critically needed transportation improvements building upon the City's commitment to create safer, healthier communities."

The Yellow Brick Road was originally conceived by a group of Iron Triangle youth in a 2008 summer program. As a means to stitch the community together and make the streets safe, the youths suggested connecting the key neighborhood hubs through a path of bright yellow bricks that designate safe bike and walking routes through the neighborhood.

"Community residents are experts about their own neighborhoods," said Toody Maher, Executive Director of Pogo Park. "They know exactly what must be done to solve their community's problems. The Yellow Brick Road is an example of a brilliant, bottoms-up solution to a very real problem that came directly from a group of local youth. Thank God we have a city government and other partners who listened to and elevated the voice of a group that is often unheard and invisible."

In 2014, Pogo Park organized a team of 30 Iron Triangle residents to walk every street in the neighborhood and note the dangerous barriers to walking and biking that included: broken sidewalks and missing crosswalks, wide streets that encourage speeding cars, poor lighting, vacant houses, reckless driving near schools, snarling dogs, unsafe dumping areas, and lack of signage.

Using the input from Pogo Park's team of Iron Triangle residents, Fehr & Peers produced a comprehensive design for the Yellow Brick Road.

The final plan includes a detailed network of cycling and pedestrian pathways with colorful way-finding signs, painted curbs and intersections. Street improvements include narrowing streets to slow cars down and calm traffic - especially near schools.

"We've always yearned for safe and secure streets and with the Yellow Brick Road, people will now feel compelled to get outside - to walk and get on their bikes instead of sitting inside their homes or just relying on their cars for transportation," said Otheree Christian, President of the Iron Triangle Neighborhood Council. "Physical activity will increase, reducing the risk of obesity, asthma, diabetes and other chronic illnesses prevalent in the Iron Triangle neighborhood. This is a game-changer – a major public health boost for our community."

Richmond's Yellow Brick Road will increase walking and bicycling rates in a neighborhood ripe for mobile transformation. The Iron Triangle's flat, short, and interconnected streets provide a perfect environment for a new network of pedestrian and bike paths that will connect key community assets together for decades to come.

"This success is a result of strong collaboration between the City and Pogo Park," said Mayor Tom Butt. "The Yellow Brick Road is a leading example of smart urban planning and will accelerate the positive changes in the Iron Triangle to create a safe, walkable connection between homes, schools and parks including the Richmond Greenway. This multi-million dollar award is a triumph of community-led, creative design and is a direct investment into the community."

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