

**SOPHIE HAHN**

Berkeley City Council, District 5
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ACTION CALENDAR

November 12, 2019

To: Honorable Members of the City Council
 From: Councilmember Sophie Hahn and Mayor Jesse Arreguín
 Subject: Budget Referral: Transportation to Support Mobility-Impaired Individuals Experiencing Homelessness who are Engaged in Rehousing and other Services

RECOMMENDATION

Refer to the budget process to allocate funds to provide transportation for mobility-impaired individuals experiencing homelessness who are engaged with rehousing and other services through the STAIR Center, The Hub, or other City of Berkeley-funded homeless services.

Refer to staff to determine needs and establish the best method for providing such transit services. Options include, but are not limited to, helping one or more service providers to purchase or lease wheelchair-accessible vehicle(s), or to repair or retrofit currently owned vehicle(s), providing additional vouchers for existing Paratransit services, providing additional taxi scripts (as recommended by the Homeless Commission), or contracting with a suitable transportation service.

Consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), vehicles purchased, leased, or otherwise procured for these purposes should include the option of/access to a boarding device (e.g. lift or ramp) so that a passenger who uses a wheelchair or mobility device can reach a securement location onboard.

BACKGROUND

Daily life requires access to transportation. Getting to work, appointments, meetings, and social gatherings requires people to be able to move around their communities.

Access to transportation is no less vital for individuals experiencing homelessness. Due in part to a tight housing market, unhoused people need to visit numerous apartments or other dwelling units before securing housing. They also need to access employment and educational opportunities, medical, behavioral health, and legal appointments, Social Security and other benefits offices, food pantries and hot meals, and other services. For those individuals who do not have access to private vehicles, and who may have difficulty using transit buses or BART trains and stations, alternative transportation options are often necessary.

The Pathways STAIR Center, The Hub, and other homeless service providers in Berkeley are successfully housing individuals experiencing homelessness and connecting them to important life-services. Because the STAIR Center is near railroad tracks, which separates it from public transit options, mobility-impaired individuals, who may use walkers or wheelchairs, have difficulty navigating to public transit. In addition, some trips involve more than one mode of transit, further complicating the achievement of important housing, health, and life goals.

Providing access to transportation for wheelchair-bound and other mobility-impaired individuals experiencing homelessness, who are working with service providers in Berkeley, is therefore essential. Private cars and vans, taxicabs, AC Transit buses, and BART trains can play a role in meeting these transportation needs. In addition, Paratransit is available for people who are unable to use regular buses or trains due to a disability or disabling health condition. However, these services may not be currently sufficient to meet transportation needs, and may result in delayed access to housing and services, negatively impacting the City's ability to maximize the opportunity to deliver rehousing and other services overall.

In addition, the Homeless Commission recently passed a resolution recommending to the City Council a similar proposal (attached), which staff should consider simultaneous with this referral.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Staff to return to Council funding requirements through the Budget Process.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The City should explore vehicle options that are more efficient and less polluting to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Councilmember Sophie Hahn, Council District 5, (510) 981-7150

ATTACHMENT

Recommendation from Berkeley Homeless Commission: Taxi Scripts to be provided to residents of Pathways/the STAIR Center



Homeless Commission

ACTION CALENDAR

December 3, 2019

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Homeless Commission

Submitted by: Carole Marasovic, Chair, Homeless Commission

Subject: Taxi scripts to be provided to residents of Pathways/the STAIR Center

RECOMMENDATION

The Homeless Commission recommends that taxi scripts be provided to persons referred to Pathways/ the STAIR Center and that continued taxi scripts be provided to Pathways/STAIR residents, during their stay, in order to insure safe, accessible transport.

Alternatively, the Commission recommends that transportation arrangements be made with ride share services such as Lyft or Uber, or a public shuttle system coordinated by the City of Berkeley and Alameda County.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

Staff would have to identify the costs of this recommendation. It should be easy to implement and far less costly than the potential loss of a life from an accident crossing the railroad tracks or injuries to persons walking the distance between the bus routes and Pathways/the STAIR Center.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The Pathways STAIR Center is located in a remote area of West Berkeley. The two closest bus line stops, the 72 and the 51, stop eight streets and seven streets away, respectively.

Walking to Pathways also requires walking across railroad tracks, challenging for able-bodied persons, particularly in late hours, and even more challenging for persons with disabilities. Pathways has been identified as a low-barrier shelter so that persons residing there can enter and leave at all hours.

BACKGROUND

Approximately fifty persons reside at Pathways/the STAIR Center at any one time. Pathways is currently the primary navigation center for housing unhoused persons. Former and current Pathways residents often describe the challenge of walking from remote bus lines and the dangers of safely crossing the nearby railroad tracks. Many Pathway residents have serious physical disabilities, with and without equipment.

Transportation to and from Pathways is difficult for them. Residents staying at Pathways come and go freely and need to leave the navigation center to conduct everyday business and make appointments. Some return late in the evening.

At our September 11, 2019 regular meeting, the Homeless Commission approved the report, "Taxi scripts to be provided to residents of Pathways/the STAIR Center," with the following motion:

Action: M/S/C Hill/ Mulligan to approve the report to Council with the following amendments: (i) add "..., as well as public shuttle system coordinated by the City of Berkeley and Alameda County" to the last sentence under the Recommendation section, and (ii) remove the sentence under the Alternative Actions Considered section, and replace it with "We considered changes to the AC Transit bus routes."

Vote: Ayes: Hill, Mulligan, Marasovic, Hirpara, Kealoha-Blake, Hollyman, Behm-Steinberg.
Noes: None. *Abstain:* None. *Absent:* None.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

There are no identifiable environmental impacts as the taxis or ride shares providing transportation services are already operative in Berkeley.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

The Homeless Commission believes that persons staying at Pathways, particularly given their disability and aging status, need accessible, safe transportation. Potential injuries or possible deaths from crossing the railroad tracks also need to be avoided.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

We considered changes to the AC Transit bus routes.

CITY MANAGER

See companion report.

CONTACT PERSON

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