

Approve the City of Alameda Transportation Program Plan for Seniors and People with Disabilities for Fiscal Year 2024/2025

To: Honorable President and Members of the Social Service Human Relations Board

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Alameda transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities is a comprehensive paratransit program providing mobility management, travel training, and disaster preparedness. It administers two pilot programs: Alameda Free AC Transit Bus Pass program and the Alameda Independent Mobility (AIM) program, and reports to our funder, the Alameda County Transportation Commission (Alameda CTC). The Alameda Free AC Transit Bus Pass program currently serves over 820 low-income residents and has provided over 178,000 rides. The AIM program provides subsidized Uber/Lyft rides through a concierge service provided by Eden I&R to over 125 low-income residents who are fully enrolled in East Bay Paratransit. Recommendations for the fiscal year 2024/2025 include approval to continue the two pilot programs, and an increase in program management to handle the higher volume of contacts and community support.

BACKGROUND

Alameda County Measure BB provides the City of Alameda (City) with a dedicated funding source for transportation programs serving people with disabilities and seniors. East Bay Paratransit (EBP) provides paratransit service for people who are unable to use AC Transit and BART's fixed route services because of a disability or a disabling health condition, as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As required by the funding agency – the Alameda County Transportation Commission (Alameda CTC) – each jurisdiction must submit annually a paratransit program plan application to receive the local Measure BB funds for the next fiscal year, which is the purpose of this staff report.

Information about the City of Alameda transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities is available at AlamedaCA.gov/paratransit. Currently, the City of Alameda paratransit program includes the following locally-developed components to address the mobility challenges of older adults and people with disabilities:

Alameda Free AC Transit Bus Pass Program is in the second year of a three-year pilot program for low-income residents of the City of Alameda who are ages 65+ or are between the ages of 18 – 64 and have a certified disability.

Alameda Point Collaborative receives 167 subsidized Clipper BayPasses that allows for free transit on 23 public transit systems throughout the Bay Area.

AIM (Alameda Independent Mobility) just completed the second of a three-year pilot program offering curb-to-curb transportation network company (TNC) services through a third-party concierge service provider – Eden I&R, Inc. – for low-income City of Alameda residents who are East Bay Paratransit (EBP) members.

Travel Training provides community education in monthly *Transportation 101* workshops, including trip planning and transit app training, as well as *Hop on the Bus with Us* providing introduction and experience taking public transportation.

Outreach includes customer service, creating and distributing materials and promotions, press releases, community outreach and presentations. Translate applications and support documents to facilitate participation of non-English speaking residents. Collaborate with the Alameda Fire Department to facilitate and implement a disaster preparedness database for people with disabilities and seniors.

Group Trips include monthly trips for Mastick Senior Center members. Leisure Club transportation for adults with developmental disabilities who meet twice a month, and an annual

picnic for Skilled Nursing Facility residents (paused and has not resumed since COVID-19 pandemic).

Capital Program, including bus stop benches and improvements, ADA improvements in the public right of way

Project Management by City staff to manage the program.

In addition to Direct Local Distribution Measure BB and B funding to the City of Alameda and other local jurisdictions, the Alameda CTC offers an Emergency Wheelchair Service, which is provided by Easy Does It. The Fast Accessible Safe Transportation and Emergency Repair (FASTER) service funds a technician to troubleshoot wheelchair breakdowns, provides on-site repairs, and a ride home: [Easy Does It Emergency Services \(easydoesitservices.org\)](https://easydoesitservices.org).

DISCUSSION

City staff is recommending a total budget of \$1,350,613 for the Transportation Program Plan for Seniors and People with Disabilities for fiscal year 2024-25, which is approximately \$337,642 more than the current fiscal year because the use of reserve funds and the City's program participation has grown.

FY 2023-24 STATUS SUMMARY

For the current fiscal year, the City has experienced a return to activities as public health restrictions have been lifted. The recent rise in RSV virus, the flu and rising number of COVID cases has not had a measurable impact on the Paratransit program. A status summary is as follows:

Alameda Free AC Transit Bus Pass Program

The Alameda Free AC Transit Bus Pass Program grew more than 140% between December 2022 and December 2023, both for unique riders and monthly rides as illustrated in Figure 1. As of December 2023, the City has issued over 820 free bus passes to low-income Alameda residents between the age of 18 and 64 with a certified disability, and seniors over the age of 65. These passholders have boarded buses more than 178,000 times since the program began in June 2022. In 2023, 142,000 rides were taken with an average of 390 boardings per day.

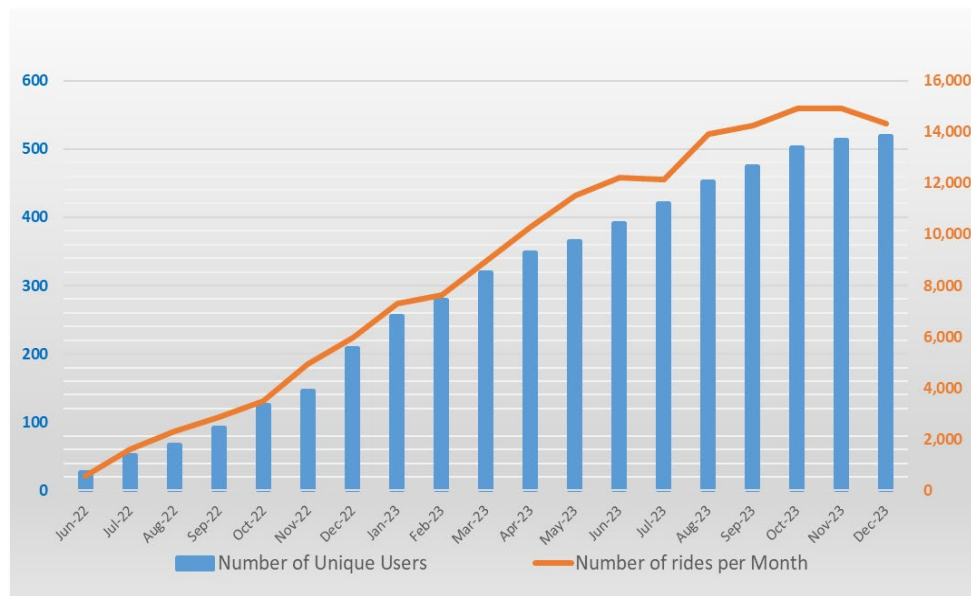


Figure 1: Growth of Unique Riders and Rides per Month

This program provides freedom for participants to travel to more destinations and on more days and times than the former Alameda Free Shuttle, whose service coverage was limited. Nearly a third of rides taken by current participants are outside the hours that the shuttle ran from 8:30 am – 4:00 pm, and passholders can now travel 7 days a week rather than being limited to Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.

The Alameda Free AC Transit Bus Pass Programs is one of AC Transit's most utilized programs with more than an 80% participation rate. The majority of passholders (64%) use their pass at over 10 times per month, and 26% of participants use their pass more than 40 times per month as seen in Figure 2. This is much higher level of usage than was possible with the previous Alameda Free Shuttle. In the 2021 Survey for Seniors and

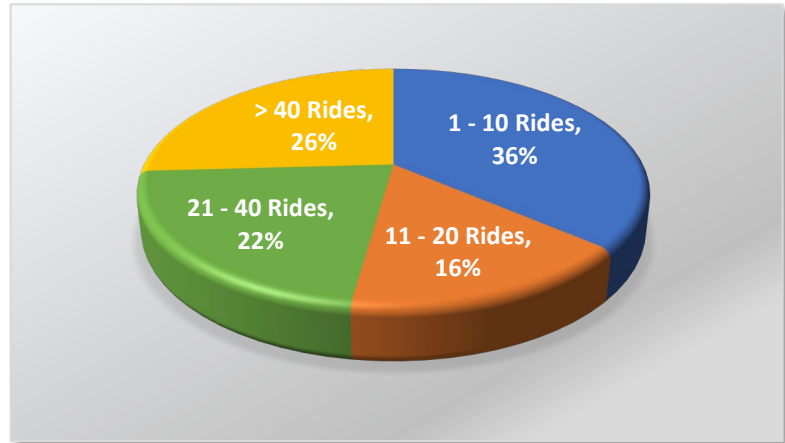


Figure 2: Passholder Participation

People with Disabilities, 14% of respondents reported riding the shuttle 1-3 times per month, and 6% of respondents reported riding the shuttle once a week.

Demographics

A large reason for the programs' success is the participation of non-English speaking residents that have signed up for the Alameda Free Bus Pass. Currently 63% of passholders do not speak English and 62% are Chinese or Vietnamese speakers. Staff have been translating program applications, communications, and handouts into six languages: English, Traditional Chinese, Simplified Chinese, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese. Volunteer translators have weekly hours to assist with filling out forms and answering questions.

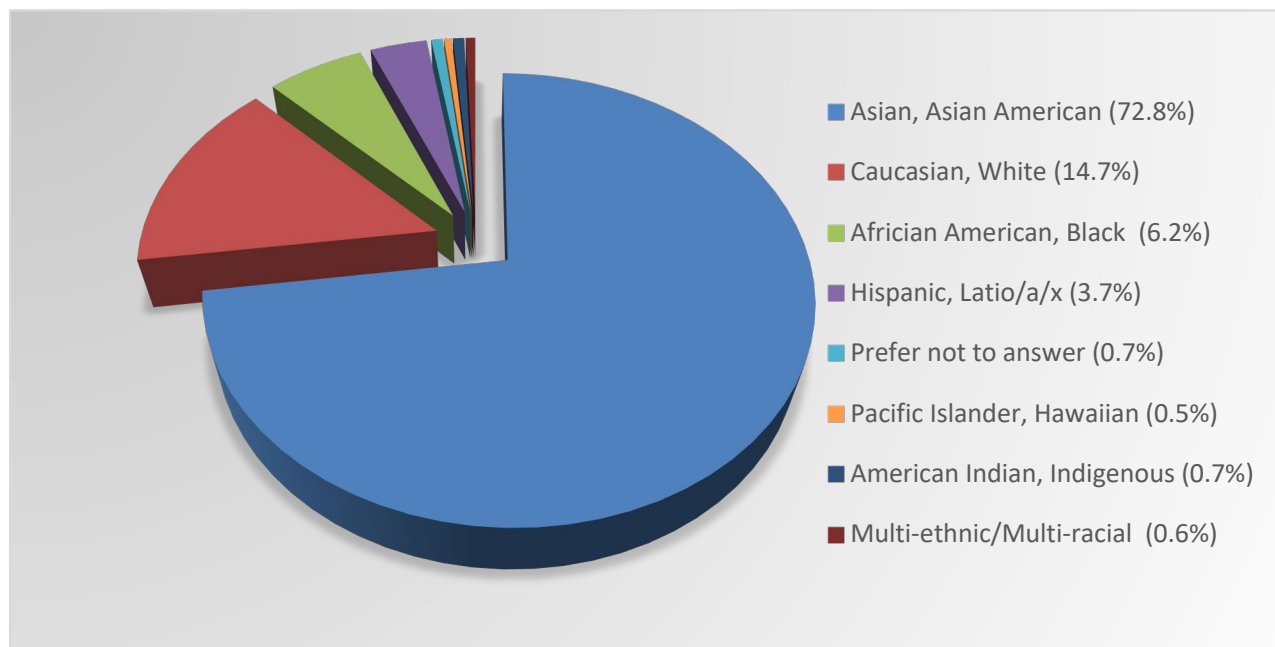


Figure 3: Passholder Ethnicity

33% of pass holders report having a certified disability. 19% are over the age of 80, and 49% are between the ages of 70 and 79. The Alameda Free AC Transit Bus Pass Program is also a tool used to identify residents who need more support, allowing staff to enroll them for additional transportation services like East Bay Paratransit and AIM, and often referring them to the Alameda Family Services case worker who has an office at the Mastick Senior Center.

Program Cost

This program is based on a “pay as you go” model, with the City paying AC Transit per ride with the per-ride rate varying according to ridership levels. As of December 2023, the average cost per ride was \$1.15, down 31% from \$1.66 at the end of 2022.

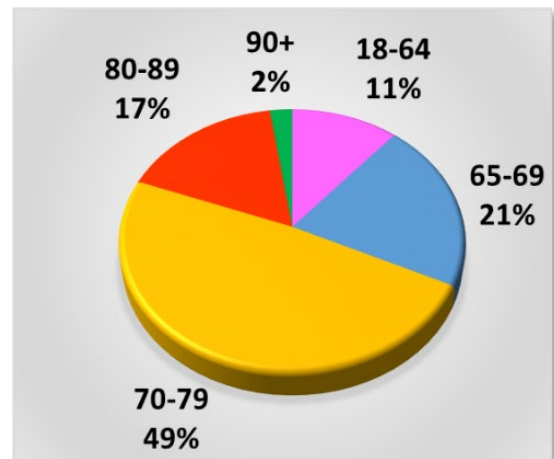


Figure 4: Age Breakdown Free Bus Pass Program

Program Feedback

Passholders consistently provide positive feedback for this program. Examples provided via the 2023 City of Alameda Transportation Survey for Seniors and People with Disabilities include:

- *“I am so grateful for the free pass. It makes my life so much better. I am able to get out more and not worry about the money on my pass.”*
- *“Alameda free bus card helps me to be able to travel in town and improved my quality of life.”*
- *“The buses are safe. I am elderly and appreciate AC transit service. I especially love the 51A and the O bus.”*
- *“I am extremely happy with my pass. It has enhanced the quality of my life.”*
- *“The Free Bus pass has enhanced the quality of my life. I have become totally dependent on my bus pass.”*
- *“Easy and convenient”*

Out of 23 respondents who reported using a wheelchair or mobility device, 22 replied that most of the time their wheelchair or device is secured properly on AC Transit. One comment from a participant who uses a wheelchair reported that their wheelchair and equipment did not fit on the bus.

Of the 188 responses to the 2023 City of Alameda Transportation Survey for Seniors and People with Disabilities, 154 respondents (82%) reported that they ride AC Transit buses, 92 respondents (49%) reported using an Alameda Free AC Transit Bus Pass, 126 respondents (67%) reported using a Senior Clipper Card, and 8 respondents (4%) report using an RTC Clipper Card for persons with disabilities. When asked to rate their satisfaction with AC Transit bus service on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being extremely dissatisfied, 110 respondents (82%) rated it as a 4 or better. This is an improvement from 2022, when 64% rated the service a 4 or better. In the same survey, 151 respondents (85%) who ride AC Transit reported that they are likely to continue using the service. This is up from 64% in 2022.

- 135 respondents (88%) reported that the drivers are courteous
- 113 respondents (73%) reported that the buses arrive on-time all or most of the time
- 35 respondents (23%) responded that bus arrive on-time some of the time

The comparison of AC Transit survey results are summarized in Figure 5.

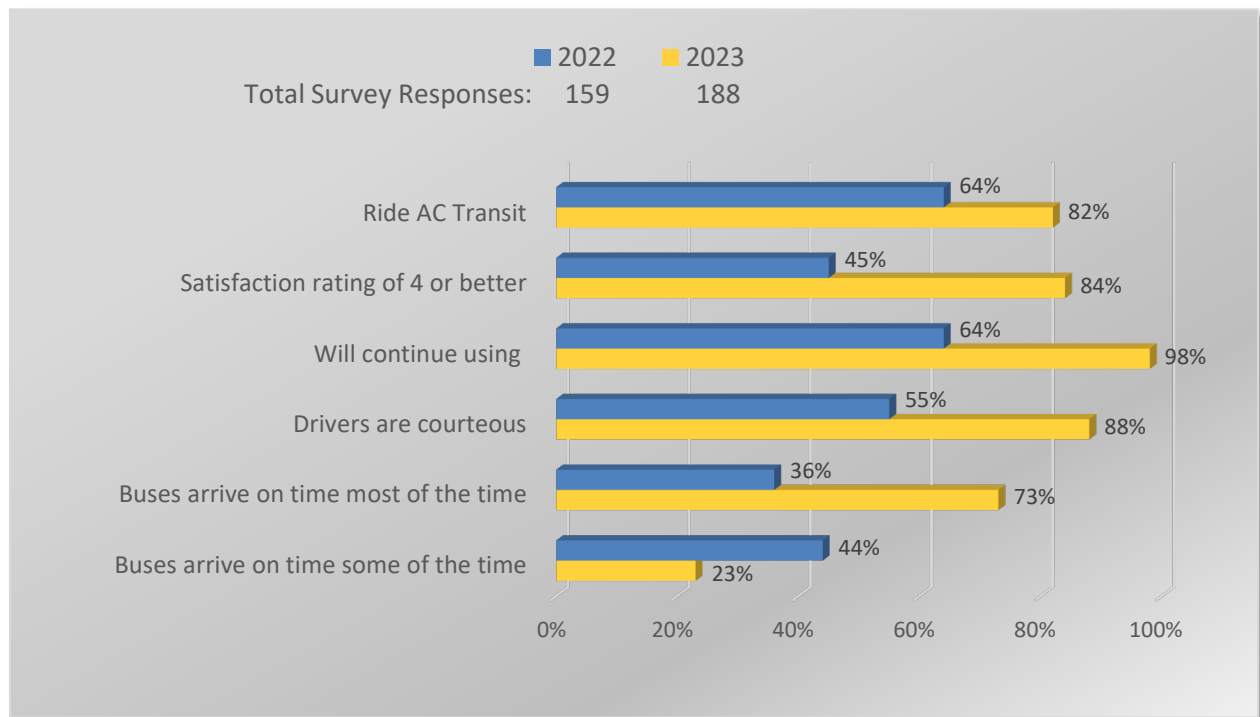


Figure 5: Responses about AC Transit, City of Alameda Transportation Survey for Seniors and People with Disabilities

See *Exhibit 1: Summary of Results from Survey for Seniors and People with Disabilities* and *Exhibit 2: Open-ended Comments from the Survey for Seniors and People with Disabilities* for a detailed summary of the survey responses.

Alameda Point Collaborative

In addition to the Free Bus Pass program, the City supports mobility needs for residents at the Alameda Point Collaborative, which is working to end homelessness by providing housing and services to create communities where formerly homeless families and individuals can flourish. Beginning in 2017, qualifying residents living in Alameda Point Collaborative's 167 units received one free EasyPass per unit providing unlimited, free access to AC Transit. In FY24-25 residents will receive the new Clipper BayPass instead of the EasyPass for AC Transit. The new pass provides free rides on all regional transportation options, like ferries, BART, and MUNI, in addition to AC Transit. Since the BayPass costs almost double that of the EasyPass; the City's paratransit program is subsidizing the program, paying the cost equivalent of the EasyPass, with the Alameda Point Collaborative covering the balance.

AIM (Alameda Independent Mobility)

In September 2021, the City Council approved the Transportation Network Company (TNC) concierge pilot program, Alameda Independent Mobility (AIM); and the pilot program launched in January 2022. Eden I&R serves as the concierge service for TNC companies, Uber/Lyft, to provide on-demand, curb-to-curb transportation services for low-income residents who are fully enrolled in East Bay Paratransit (EBP). In December 2023 the City completed the second year of this pilot program and the AIM program has seen steady growth. As of December 31, 2023, AIM has provided 1543 rides, with 1018 rides provided in 2023, almost double that of 525 rides taken in 2022. Similarly, the average number of rides have increased from 44 rides in 2022 to 85 rides in 2023. The AIM program provides each participant up to 5 rides per month, with the rider paying for the first four dollars of the ride and everything over twenty-five dollars. The average cost to the rider decreased from \$4.51 in 2022 to \$4.05 in 2023. The average cost of the ride to the AIM program decreased from \$119 in 2022 to \$58 in 2023. Table 1: Growth of AIM Program shows the growth between 2022 and 2023.

	2022	2023	Percent change
Total number of participants	90	125	↑ 39%
Total number of rides provided	525	1018	↑ 94%
Average number of rides provides per month	44	85	↑ 93%
Average number of unique users per month	13	26	↑ 100%
Average cost of ride to participant	\$4.51	\$4.05	↓ 10%
Average cost of ride	\$119	\$58	↓ 51%

Table 1: Growth of AIM Program

AIM riders use their rides to travel all over Alameda County, from Hayward to Berkeley, for recreation and social visits to medical calls and therapy. 27% of rides have a destination outside of Alameda, with 23% of rides originating outside of Alameda.

Program Feedback

In the 2023 City of Alameda Transportation Survey for Seniors and People with Disabilities, 12 respondents (6%) reported that they participate in the AIM Program with 7 out of these 12 respondents reporting actively using AIM. On a scale from one to five, with one being *not satisfied* and five being *extremely satisfied*, the average rating is 4.7, up from 3.8 in 2022. On the same scale, they report an average rating of 4.7 reporting that AIM is an important service for them. On a scale of one to four with four being the highest, they reported between 3.3 and 3.7 for the 2-1-1 representatives, Uber/Lyft drivers, cleanliness of the cars, feeling safe, and that the driver assists them with their mobility devices. A lower rating of 2.5 was given for how a service animal was treated. This is a small sampling of the AIM population; however it accurately represents the feedback that 2-1-1 and staff get from its riders.

Program Costs

Eden I&R handles an average of 272 calls per month with an average of 94% of calls resulting in either booking a ride, a new participant completing their registration, answering questions about cost of rides, and special requests; 6% are abandoned calls. The City pays a portion of Eden I&R staff and operating costs averaging \$3,500 per month. In June 2022 staff identified that the program was growing at a slower rate than anticipated, at this time staff renegotiated the percent of Eden I&R staff needed for the program administration, resulting in a 46% reduction in the average monthly costs from \$6,500. This monthly fee is relatively stable so we anticipate that as the number of participants and rides continue to increase the price per ride will go down as this amount will be distributed among the higher quantity of rides booked.

Reaching Inactive AIM Participants

AIM currently has 125 participants enrolled in the program, with 47% being active users. This is up from 32% from 2022.

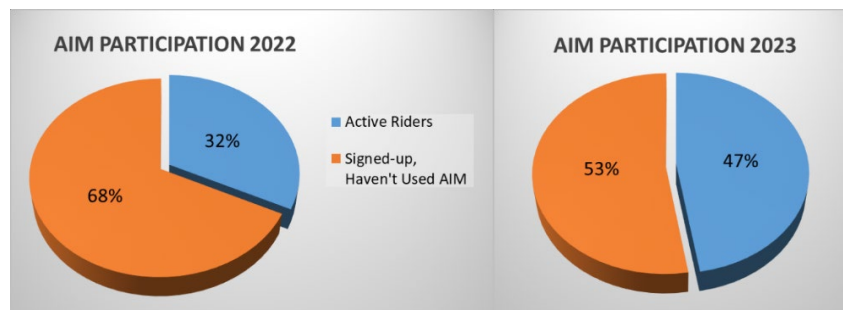
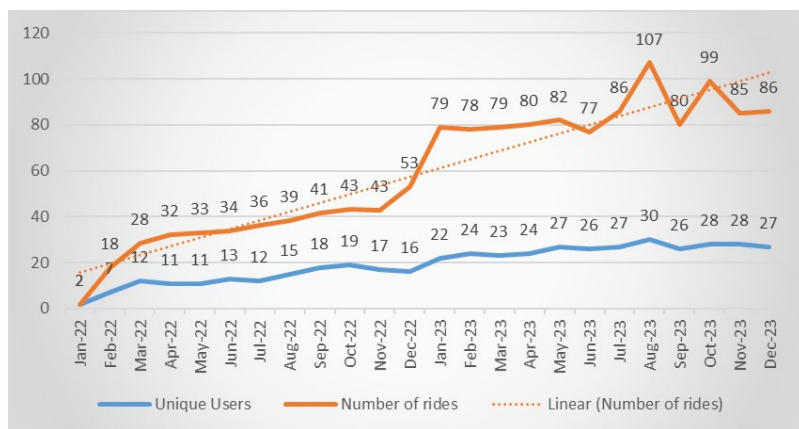


Figure 6: AIM Participation:

The challenge for the inactive participants remains education, the program is not available evenings or weekends when they want to use it, they are hesitant to use the limited number of rides, or they use AIM as a back-up option. We have sent out two letters in November 2022 and June 2023 to these participants reminding them that the service is available, how it works, and its benefits. Over 120 letters were sent and with each mailing, respectfully, there was a 23% and 12% increase in rides taken. Historically the inactive population responds best to phone calls explaining the program and answering their questions.

These phone calls are lengthy calls averaging 30 minutes. Even with limited outreach, the AIM program has steadily grown. As illustrated in figure 7, there was a significant jump in January 2023 when staff called all of the AIM participants. There was another spike in August 2023 when a letter and robo call campaign was done. The dips in September, November and December 2023 all correspond with months that had holidays and reduced days of service.

Figure 7: AIM: Growth Trends



A CalTrans grant enabled Eden I&R to extend service to include weekends from the hours 8 am to 4 pm in February 2024,. There is no additional cost to the program for this extended service.

The Paratransit program is staffed by a single part-time employee. The large influx of Free Pass Applicants and the resulting translation needed this year did not allow for time to call the inactive AIM participants. In the coming months staff is planning an outreach campaign to conduct a program evaluation with existing AIM participants.

Outreach

The outreach program includes distributing program materials, informational mailings, press releases, listings in the City Recreation Guides, promoting the annual survey, and assisting with the issuance of Clipper cards and EBP applications to seniors and people with disabilities. In 2023, staff assisted with 18 EBP applications and averaged 194 transportation contacts per month. Staff led nine *Transportation 101* workshops with 86 participants that included transit app training, a representative from Clipper Card, Alameda Police Department presenting *Safe Driving for Seniors*, and a Senior Transportation Coordinator presenting the City's Vision Zero and Transportation plans. Five *Hop on the Bus with Us!* travel training programs were conducted with 14 participants. Transportation 101 presentations were given to Alameda Recreation and Park's Leisure Club, the Alameda Main Library, Independence Plaza (Alameda Housing Authority), and Dignity Village. Targeted outreach was done for the Hispanic population through Our Lady of Guadalupe Society at St. Joseph's Basilica and to the La Luz Del Mundo Church.

Staff collaborated with the Alameda Fire Department to create a questionnaire to facilitate and implement a disaster preparedness database for people with disabilities and seniors. Using the annual survey for Seniors and People with Disabilities, a beta group of Alameda residents who may need additional assistance in the event of a large-scale emergency was identified. Staff provided a beta group of people who expressed interest in the program to the fire department.

Group Trips

Mastick Senior Center resumed group trips in June 2022 and is running at full capacity. In FY 2223, Bus transportation was provided for eleven trips with a total of 426 round trip rides. The Leisure Club, a recreational program for adults with developmental disabilities, meets twice a month. In

2023, the paratransit program provided 487 one-way trips to and from 24 meetings and 4 additional activities like A's games and their prom. The bus capacity has returned to pre-COVID capacity of 18 passengers. The annual Fall picnic for Skilled Nursing Facility residents was canceled in 2020 due to COVID and has not resumed.

Capital Program

In FY 2223, the City's Measure BB paratransit reserve funds paid for twenty-two new benches at bus stops, the Otis Drive Improvement Project for access to/from bus stops including bus benches, enhanced sidewalks and curb ramps.

Project Management

This component covers City staff to support program development, administration, and compliance, including participation in Alameda CTC meetings. The program oversight ensures that the actions align with proposed and approved program. In August 2023, the staff hours were increased from 18 hours per week to 28 hours per week to manage the higher volume of contacts, and program management.

PROPOSED PROGRAM FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024/25

City staff is recommending a similar paratransit program as the current fiscal year. The two main programs – Alameda Free AC Transit Bus Passes and AIM – are both in the second year of three-year pilot programs as approved by City Council.

The fiscal year 2024-2025 Plan is being developed with input from key stakeholders and program participants by conducting a survey in November 2023 and by reaching out to four City Commissions in 2024: Commission on Persons with Disabilities (April 10), Recreation and Parks Commission (March 14), Transportation Commission (February 28) and Social Service Human Relations Board (March 28). Exhibit 1 provides a summary of the survey results.

Free AC Transit Bus Passes (\$278,064, an increase of \$42,064)

Free AC Transit Bus Pass users expressed overwhelming satisfaction and gratitude for the program. Free AC Transit Bus Pass users commented that they “love the freedom” and that the pass is “excellent,” “superb,” and it saves them money. One comment sums it up: “It [the Free AC Transit Bus Pass] is very convenient, and I can go out more frequently without worrying about how much money I need on my clipper card.” With the current budget of \$260,000, we estimate that 17,000 rides per month could be provided. If there is an average of 20 rides per pass holder, we can provide passes for 850 residents. We are nearing our target with 820 pass holders. We are currently conducting an audit of our pass holders to verify that they are still living in Alameda and meet the program requirements.



Figure 8: Happy Free Bus Pass Participants

This year the Alameda Point Collaborative will be receiving the New Clipper BayPass instead of the EasyPass. The paratransit program will continue to support the program by paying \$108 per household, (\$18,064 annually) the equivalent cost of an EasyPass to subsidize the new BayPass.

Program recommendations: Staff recommends that the program should continue supporting the Alameda Point Collaborative’s 167 units subsidizing the New Clipper BayPasses and continue with the three-year pilot for the Alameda Free AC Transit Bus Pass Program for low-income seniors and adults with certified disabilities living in Alameda.

Alameda Independent Mobility (AIM) (\$125,000, no change)

AIM is a curb-to-curb service to facilitate same-day trips for low-income residents who are enrolled in EBP. Eden I&R, Inc. provides concierge service includes booking and monitors up to five Uber/Lyft trips per month within Alameda County Monday through Friday from 8:15 AM to 5:30 PM, and Saturday and Sunday from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Applicants agreed to use this concierge service and pay the first \$4 of each ride and any charge over \$25 using a credit, debit, or prepaid debit

card. To increase program participation and the average monthly rides, staff plans the following outreach:

- A mailing was sent out announcing the addition of weekend service.
- Phone campaign to inactive AIM participants.
- Transportation 101 workshop focused on how to safely use Uber/Lyft rides for education and to promote the AIM program.
- and another letter campaign to East Bay Paratransit clients who are not participating in AIM and live in Alameda.

Our target goal for 2024 is to reach 175 participants and an average of 150 rides per month.

Eden I&R provides translation services to non-English speakers, translating the documentation for the AIM program will assist more non-English speakers to use the program. Eden I&R is the City's vendor of choice since they are the provider of the 2-1-1 social services help line, enabling them to aid callers for other resources such as food and healthcare.

Program recommendations: Staff recommends continuing the three-year pilot program working with Eden I&R to facilitate same-day trips for low-income residents who are enrolled in EBP, and to continue identifying reliable wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAV) to add to this service.

Customer Service and Outreach (\$11,200, a decrease of \$5,000)

The outreach program includes distributing program materials, informational mailings, writing press releases, listing services in the quarterly City Recreation Guides, presenting at Mastick Senior Center transportation program orientations and with other community members, translating to assist non-English speaking clients, assisting with the issuance of Clipper cards to seniors or people with disabilities and tabling at events. As a service to EBP customers, staff also sell EBP tickets. Staff is available three days a week for telephone and personal appointments to assist with program applications, travel planning, and transportation needs. Upcoming programs include the Transportation 101 workshop to be conducted in Cantonese and presentations at Jack Capon Villa, the Leisure Club, at Independence Plaza, and at the Main Library. Working in collaboration with the Alameda Fire Department, residents who have expressed interest in the Emergency Response Database will be contacted to participate in the Emergency Response program, with testing and refinement as needed before deploying it to the general public. Staff will assist in the creation and distribution of support literature.

Program recommendations: Staff recommends a slightly lower outreach budget than the current fiscal year since less advertisement and printed materials are needed than were needed when we offered the Alameda Loop Shuttle.

Capital Program (\$800,000, an increase of \$225,000 from last year)

The City uses paratransit program reserves to for projects that are a one-time expenditure to improve access to/from bus stops including sidewalk enhancements, bus benches, curb bulb-outs and bus islands.

Program recommendations: Staff recommends utilizing funds for bus stop access and ADA improvements as part of major corridor updates being constructed starting in 2024 on Clement Avenue and Central Avenue.

Group Trips (\$27,000, no change from last year)

The City's program supports transportation for recreation programs run through Mastick Senior Center and Alameda Recreation and Park Department as follows:

- **Mastick Monthly Trips:** Provides financial assistance for the Mastick Senior Center's monthly trip program with travel destinations to various Bay Area locations (i.e. San Francisco, Livermore, Napa, etc.).

- **Leisure Club:** Supports the driver and the shuttle bus maintenance for the Alameda Recreation and Park Department's Leisure Club. The Leisure Club is a social recreation program offered for adults - 18 years or older - with developmental disabilities that meets twice a month.
- **Crown Memorial Beach:** Subsidizes the transportation expenses to/from Crown Memorial Beach for the Annual Skilled Nursing Facility Picnic, potentially resuming in Fall 2024.

Program recommendations: Staff recommends providing the same services for Group Trips.

Program Management (\$97,091, an increase of \$50,980): The management component funds the part-time paratransit coordinator, Leisure Club driver, part-time program administrative support, as well as on-call experts. In August 2023, the hours of staff was increased from 18 hours per week to 28 hours per week to accommodate the added program support required by the increase community participation. To reflect the true cost of the program management and administrative costs, 5% FTE of Transportation Planning Manager, and 2% FTE of Administrative Services Coordinator were added to this budget. The program management includes providing program oversight, completing the Alameda CTC application and reporting requirements, reviewing program data and invoices, participating in Alameda CTC's paratransit committees, renewing, or establishing contracts and programs, conducting outreach and coordinating with transportation providers and City staff.

The paratransit program is currently in the Planning, Building and Transportation Department. With the program's recent growth, it is recommended that an analysis is conducted by Nelson|Nygaard Consulting to review the organizational structure of the paratransit program to determine which department it should be housed in, what type of position(s) should staff it, where staff fall in the organizational chart. This study is estimated to cost \$20,000.

Program recommendations: Fund part-time paratransit coordinator, group trip driver, part-time administrative support, percent of FTE department support staff, as well as on-call experts to conduct an organizational review of program.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the City of Alameda transportation program plan for seniors and people with disabilities for fiscal year 2024/2025.

Respectfully submitted by,

Katherine Kaldis
Paratransit Coordinator

Lisa Foster
Acting Transportation Planning Manager

Exhibit

1. Summary – Survey for Seniors and People with Disabilities – November 2023
2. Summary – Open-ended Comments Submitted for the Survey for Seniors and People with Disabilities – November 2023
3. 2023 City of Alameda Transportation Questionnaire Relating to Seniors and People with Disabilities
4. Presentation