

Commission on Disability Issues

February 8, 2017

Item 4-B

Approve City of Alameda Paratransit Program Plan for Fiscal Year 2017/2018

Background

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires transit agencies to offer transportation services (paratransit) for persons certified as unable to use regular fixed route transit – **AC Transit** and **BART**. Paratransit services must be made available to eligible users within three quarters of a mile of the existing fixed transit routes during normal operating hours. The mandated paratransit service in Alameda is provided by **East Bay Paratransit** (EBP).

Furthermore, the Alameda County Transportation Commission (Alameda CTC), which administers Alameda County's combined one-cent sales tax for transportation known as Measure B and BB funds, offers **Wheelchair and Scooter Breakdown Service** by calling 1-877-50-WHEEL (1-877-509-4335) and a **Hospital Discharge Transportation Service**. This service provides same day door-to-door transportation for individuals who need transportation after being discharged from the hospital, AND who have a health or disabling condition preventing the use of public transit.

Measures B and BB provides a dedicated funding source to local jurisdictions for non-mandated, locally-based paratransit services for individuals with disabilities and for seniors, which is not required under ADA. Information about the various **City of Alameda Paratransit Program** services is available at: <https://www.alamedaca.gov/public-works/city-alameda-paratransit-services>. The Alameda CTC requires each jurisdiction to annually submit a program plan application to receive the local Measure B/BB funds.

Discussion

The City of Alameda Paratransit Program proposed Fiscal Year 2017-18 application for \$608,000 to Alameda CTC is more than last year's application of \$532,000 due to the reserve that needs to be expended. Several of the newly proposed and expanded programs are starting to be implemented now, and some of them will be implemented in the coming fiscal year. In mid-January, staff hired a Paratransit Coordinator to ensure that the paratransit program is implemented effectively and best meets customer needs.

This program plan for FY 2017-18 is being developed with input from key stakeholders and program participants by conducting a survey (December 2016 - January 2017) and by reaching out to four City Commissions: Commission on Disability Issues (February 8), Recreation and Parks Commission (Feb 9), Transportation Commission (February 22) and the Social Service Human Relations Board (February 23). The section below describes the City's proposed paratransit program, the results of its annual paratransit

program survey, and a service cost analysis.

Proposed Alameda Paratransit Program

The City of Alameda Paratransit program - funded by Measures B and BB - offers an intra-Alameda shuttle, two taxi subsidy programs, group trips, scholarships for qualifying residents, customer service/outreach and staff to ensure that these programs are effectively managed.

Alameda Paratransit Shuttle (\$172,000, a \$2,000 increase from last year): In 2009, the City Council approved the initiation of the Alameda Paratransit Shuttle service with the goal of reducing motor vehicle trips by seniors and individuals with disabilities and reducing the dependence on paratransit taxi services within the City. The shuttle service is open to the public yet the primary purpose of the shuttle is to serve individuals with disabilities and seniors by providing access to shopping destinations and medical facilities around the City. The driver may assist riders with boarding and exiting the shuttle, securing wheelchairs and carrying up to five bags of groceries or a folding shopping cart. The shuttle operates from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, and has a one hour frequency. The shuttle routes are as follows:

- ***Tuesdays:*** West Loop (between Alameda Landing and downtown Alameda)
- ***Wednesdays:*** East Loop (between Bay Farm Island, downtown Alameda and Mastick Senior Center)
- ***Thursdays:*** Central Loop (between downtown Alameda, Shore Line Drive and Bridgeside Center/Nob Hill Market)

Recommended changes: Staff recommends increasing the shuttle service frequency from every one hour to every 30 minutes. The higher frequency service will reduce the waiting times of shuttle riders. This change was proposed for the current fiscal year; however, staff limitations and coordination with other planning efforts underway have delayed implementation. Furthermore, the shuttle service was evaluated as part of the citywide Transportation Plan to ensure that this service integrates with other existing and new services proposed in the plan. The respondents of the annual Paratransit survey selected “Alameda Loop” as the preferred name of the shuttle service. Staff will change the name from “Alameda Paratransit Shuttle” to “Alameda Loop” to encourage all types of riders while targeting seniors and individuals with disabilities.

Medical Return Trip Improvement Program - MRTIP (\$25,000, no change from last year): MRTIP is available only to Alameda residents who are East Bay Paratransit-certified riders. This taxi subsidy program provides a flexible option for returning home from medical appointments within Alameda County, thereby eliminating the uncertainty of coordinating return trips with East Bay Paratransit. Since it is difficult to predict when a medical appointment might end, MRTIP offers the option of calling the City of Alameda’s transportation provider for a trip home at the time participants need it. Participants may

purchase up to ten MRTIP travel vouchers per month. MRTIP travel vouchers cost \$2.50 each and cover the total cost of the ride. Sedans or lift-equipped vans are available.

Recommended changes: Staff will monitor the budget to ensure an adequate supply of MRTIP travel vouchers is available for the entire fiscal year. The current demand averages over 6 MRTIP trips each month at an average trip cost of \$30. The proposed budget accommodates growth averaging up to 50 trips each month, a higher average trip cost of \$37 and a contingency of 10 percent. Growth is expected now that the City has a new taxi provider established.

Premium Taxi Service (\$35,000, no change from last year): The Premium Taxi Service provides subsidized taxi trips for Alameda residents age 70 and older as well as for residents certified to use East Bay Paratransit. This service provides a 50 percent discount for taxi rides within Alameda County, and is available for all types of trips in Alameda County. It is especially valuable for travel on short notice. Premium Taxi Vouchers cost \$2.50 each and have a \$5 value. Multiple travel vouchers may be used per trip. Taxi drivers are not allowed to provide change. Individuals are limited to a maximum of 20 travel vouchers per quarter (every three months). Sedans or lift-equipped vans are available.

Recommended changes: Staff is recommending an increased subsidy of 70 percent per trip instead of the current 50 percent since reserves exist in the City's Paratransit funds. Staff also recommends increasing the cost of a voucher to \$3 each instead of the current \$2.50 so that the 70 percent subsidy would total \$10 per trip voucher. This voucher cost better reflects the minimum trip cost for the taxi provider. Staff will monitor the budget to ensure an adequate supply of Premium Taxi Service vouchers is available for the entire fiscal year. The current demand averages 89 Premium taxi trips each month at an average trip cost of \$11. The proposed budget accommodates growth averaging up to 150 trips each month, a higher average trip cost of \$17 and a contingency of 10 percent.

Group Trips (\$33,000, an \$8,000 increase from last year): The City's Paratransit program supports transportation for recreation programs run through Mastick Senior Center and Alameda Recreation and Park Department as follows:

- ***Mastick Monthly Trips:*** This program provides financial assistance with transportation expenses for the Mastick Senior Center's monthly trip program. Travel destinations may include various Bay Area locations (i.e. San Francisco, Livermore, etc.).
- ***Leisure Club:*** Funding 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 special needs that meets twice a month.
- ***Crown Memorial Beach:*** The program subsidizes a portion of the transportation

expense to/from Crown Memorial Beach for the Annual Nursing Home Picnic.

Recommended changes: The increase in budget allows for an increased subsidy of the Crown Memorial Beach picnic.

Scholarship Programs (\$22,000, a \$3,000 decrease from last year): There are two different types of scholarships as described below:

- **Matching Funds for Taxi Programs (\$3,000):** Matching funds are available to assist individuals with Premium Taxi Service and MRTIP expenses totaling \$3,000. To be eligible, individuals must be Alameda residents, be certified for the Premium Taxi Service or MRTIP, and meet the very low-income requirements. A limit of \$50 in matching funds per household is available each fiscal year as long as funding is available.
- **Subsidized Bus Passes (\$19,000):** This program provides subsidized monthly AC Transit passes to Alameda Point Collaborative residents who are seniors or individuals with disabilities. This program is expected to begin in March 2017, and will act as a pilot program for other potential fixed route transit pass subsidies.

Recommended changes: The budget decrease reflects a more accurate cost estimate for the subsidized AC Transit bus pass pilot program with the Alameda Point Collaborative.

Mobility Management (\$15,000, no change from last year): Staff will work with key stakeholders such as non-profit organizations and Alameda seniors and individuals with disabilities to initiate a pilot program to better assist qualifying individuals with transportation. As defined by Access Alameda, "Mobility management is an overarching approach to transportation that is focused on individual customer travel needs rather than a 'one size fits all' solution. It improves awareness of transportation options and reduces customer confusion, expands travel options and access for consumers, and provides more cost-effective and efficient service delivery through improved coordination and partnerships. Travel training is one example of a mobility management strategy. Other strategies include individualized transportation information and trip planning services." A local Alameda example is a volunteer initiative known as the Mastick Walking Group, which involves weekly outings led by an Alamedan on buses and other transit.

Recommended changes: Staff is recommending to explore the replacement of the now defunct Mobility Matters volunteer driver program with a more localized and customized mobility management program as a pilot study.

Capital Program (\$200,000, an increase of \$100,000): This capital program will cover the cost of purchasing and installing new bus benches, poles, signs and schedules to be placed at shuttle stops as well as bus benches at AC Transit bus stops. In addition, the program will cover accessible pedestrian signals, accessible on-street parking spaces,

curb ramps and truncated domes at additional locations throughout the city.

Customer Service and Outreach (\$61,600, a decrease of \$25,000): The outreach program includes printing schedules and flyers, advertisements, limited program incentives, banners, orientations at Mastick Senior Center and producing informational mailings. As a service to East Bay Paratransit customers in the City of Alameda, staff also sells East Bay Paratransit tickets.

Recommended changes: Staff proposes a campaign to promote the more frequent and improved branding of the shuttle service. The outreach budget is lower than the previous year due to the retiring of a staff member in charge of outreach and the hiring of a Paratransit Coordinator, which is covered below under Program Management.

Program Management (\$44,400, a decrease of \$6,000): This amount funds the part-time Paratransit Coordinator and Transportation Planning staff as well as on-call experts to provide program oversight, complete the Alameda CTC application and reporting requirements, review program data and invoices, participate in Alameda CTC's paratransit committees, renew or establish new contracts, conduct outreach meetings and other outreach activities, and coordinate with transportation providers and Mastick Senior Center staff.

Recommended changes: The new Paratransit Coordinator will be in charge of managing the Paratransit program. The lower budget amount better reflects actual spending levels from previous fiscal year efforts.

Annual Paratransit Survey

To ensure the City's paratransit program meets the community's needs, staff from Mastick Senior Center and the Transportation Planning Department conduct an annual survey of residents registered with the program. This year, the City also opened up the survey to non-participants to better understand the needs of residents who are older or with a disability.

This year's survey was conducted in December 2016/January 2017. The City received a total of 115 responses with 32 responses from taxi program participants and 18 responses from shuttle service riders. Participants were positive: 96 percent of respondents said they were satisfied with the taxi program and 95 percent said they were satisfied with the shuttle service. To help gauge the City program's satisfaction rates, the City asks about satisfaction with East Bay Paratransit (EBP). Being that EBP is a much more complex service, satisfaction tends to be lower, which it is at 81 percent. City staff provides compiled survey responses to EBP staff for their review and information. Other City survey results are as follows:

Taxi Program

- The reasons for why respondents stated that they do not use the subsidized taxi program include: drive alone at 25 percent, someone else drives me at 16 percent, did not know about the program at 33 percent, not eligible at 13 percent and other at 14 percent.
- If the taxi program were expanded to include Lyft, Uber or other similar type of service, respondents stated that 51 percent would use a Lyft or Uber service, 24 percent stated that they prefer Lyft/Uber over traditional taxi cabs, 36 percent stated that they prefer taking a taxi cab rather than a Lyft/Uber service, and 61 percent stated that if they could get a cheaper trip by sharing a Lyft/Uber ride with other passengers then they would use this service.

Shuttle Service

- The reasons for why respondents stated that they do not use the shuttle service include: drive alone at 36 percent, someone else drives me at 23 percent, parking is free/cheap at 1 percent, shuttle does not travel near my home at 8 percent, shuttle does not travel near my destination at 4 percent and do not know about the shuttle at 27 percent.
- Instead of “Alameda Paratransit Shuttle,” respondents stated that the preferred name is “Alameda Loop.”

Service Cost Analysis:

The service costs for the shuttle and the two taxi programs are as follows:

- **Shuttle:** The cost for the shuttle service averages almost \$14 per trip, which is less than the \$20 per trip maximum specified in the Alameda CTC’s *Paratransit Program Implementation Guidelines*. The shuttle ridership averaged 449 trips per month in 2016, which was an almost 6 percent increase from the average of 424 trips per month in 2015 (Figure 1).
- **MRTIP:** The MRTIP taxi program averages about \$30 per trip, which is the same as last year. There were an average of 6 MRTIP taxi trips per month in 2016 compared to 16 MRTIP trips per month in 2015, which was a 63 percent decrease. This decrease in usage is attributed to a change in the taxi provider, which caused a disruption in the service (Figure 2).
- **Premium:** The Premium Taxi Service averages about \$11 per trip, which is slightly higher than last year’s \$10 per trip. There were an average of 89 Premium taxi trips per month in 2016 compared to 87 Premium trips per month in 2015, which was a 2 percent increase (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Alameda Paratransit Shuttle – Boardings per Month

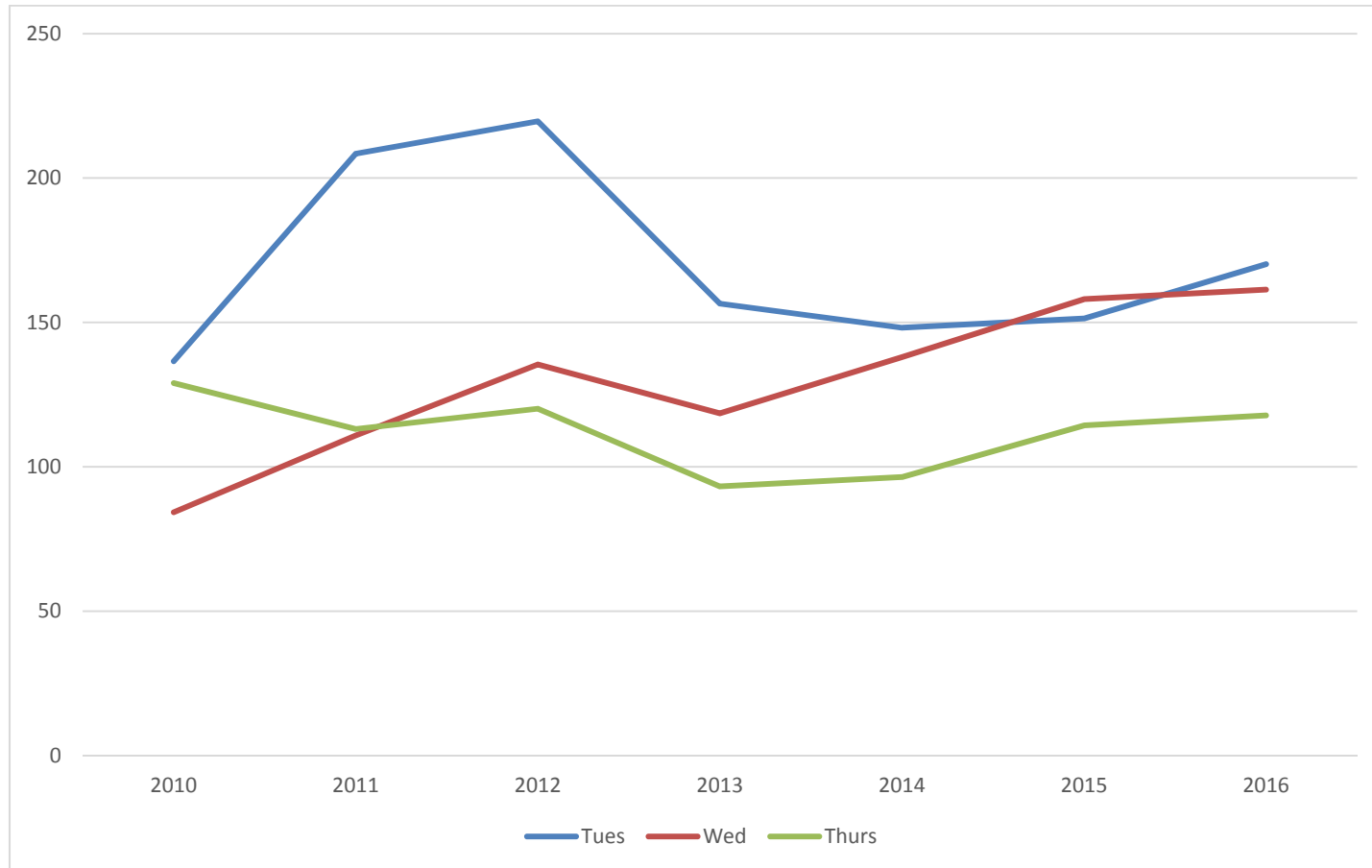
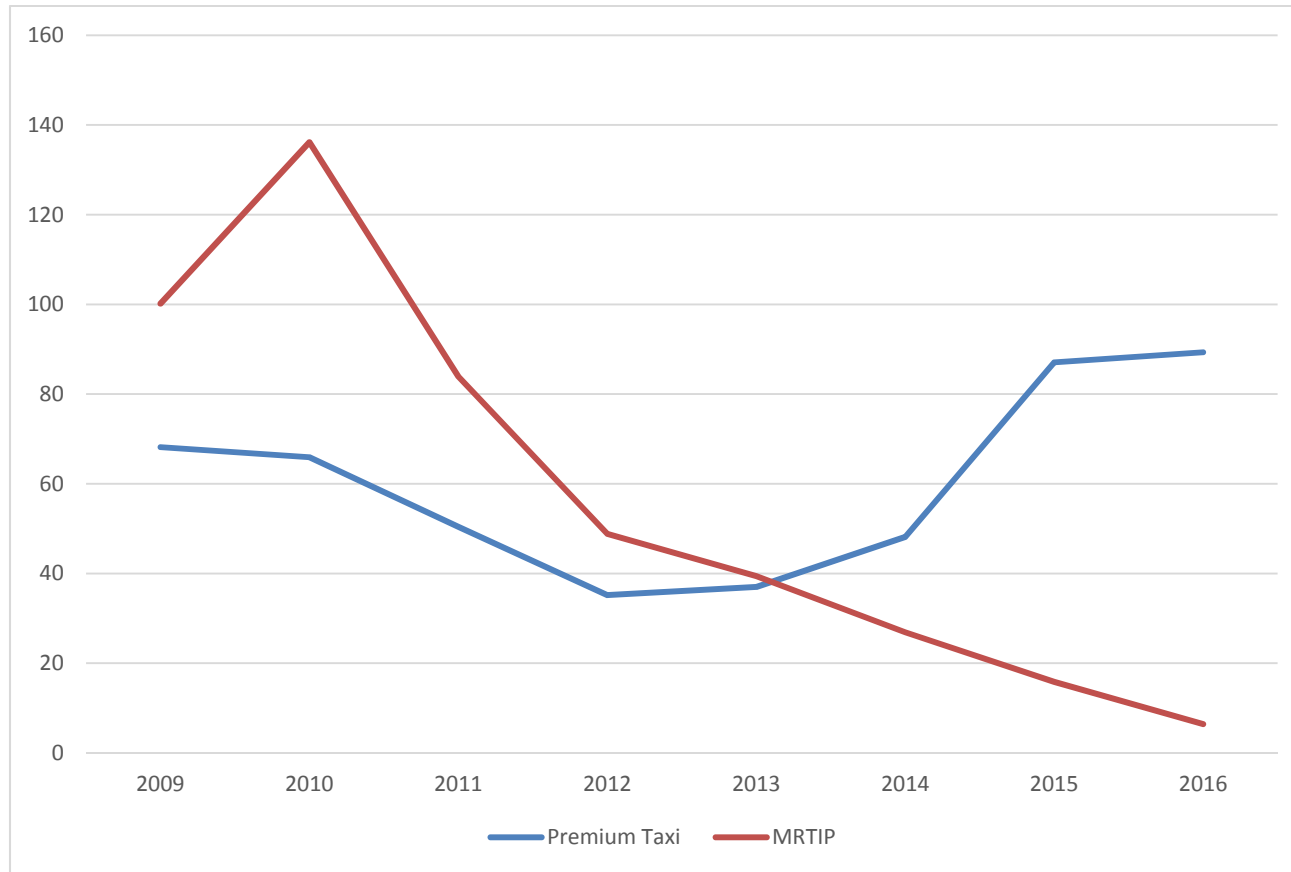


Figure 2: Alameda Paratransit Taxi Services – Passengers per Month



Financial Impact

The Transportation Services - Paratransit Program Application (Fund 287, Program 9161103), as outlined above, totals \$608,000. The program will be funded from the following sources (all at projected amounts): Alameda CTC Measure B/BB (Funds 215.4 and 215.41) paratransit funding allocation (\$358,237), fund balance (\$300,000), EBP ticket sales (\$6,000) and sales of travel vouchers (\$8,000). The remaining unallocated funds (\$64,000) will be placed in reserves for future years. There is no impact to the General Fund.

Municipal Code/Policy Document Cross Reference

This action does not affect the Alameda Municipal Code. The City's Paratransit Program supports the General Plan Objective 4.1.5 "Consider the transportation needs of the community, including those with limited mobility options", and the General Plan Policy 4.1.5.b: "Continue to support the Paratransit program."

Recommendation

Approve the application for Measure B/BB Paratransit funding in the amount of \$608,000 for FY17-18.

Respectfully submitted by,

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Exhibits

1: Paratransit Program PowerPoint