

Social Services Human Relations Board

January 23, 2020

Approve the City of Alameda Transportation Program Plan for Seniors and People with Disabilities for Fiscal Year 2020/2021

Background

Measures B and BB provide the City of Alameda with dedicated funding sources for non-mandated, locally based transportation services for people with disabilities and seniors, which are not required under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). East Bay Paratransit provides the ADA required and mandated paratransit service that supplements AC Transit and BART's fixed route services. As required by the funding agency – the Alameda County Transportation Commission (Alameda CTC) – the City of Alameda uses the Measure B and BB paratransit funds to reduce transportation gaps experienced by people with disabilities and seniors.

The City of Alameda paratransit program includes the following locally developed solutions to address the mobility challenges of older adults and people with disabilities:

- Discounted taxi services including scholarships
- Free Alameda Loop Shuttle (www.AlamedaLoopShuttle.com)
- Group trips: monthly Mastick trips for seniors, bi-weekly Leisure Club trips for adults with developmental disabilities and an annual picnic for Skilled Nursing Facility residents
- Free AC Transit bus passes for Alameda Point Collaborative qualifying residents and Alameda Housing Authority qualifying residents at some facilities
- Advertisement for a door-through-door transportation service – LIFE Eldercare
- One-time capital investments such as replacing bus shelters and Cross Alameda Trail improvements specifically for seniors
- Customer service, materials and outreach
- City staff involvement to ensure that these programs are effectively managed

Information about the City of Alameda transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities is available at: www.AlamedaParatransit.com. The Alameda CTC requires each jurisdiction to annually submit a program plan application to receive the local Measure B/BB funds, which is the purpose of this staff report.

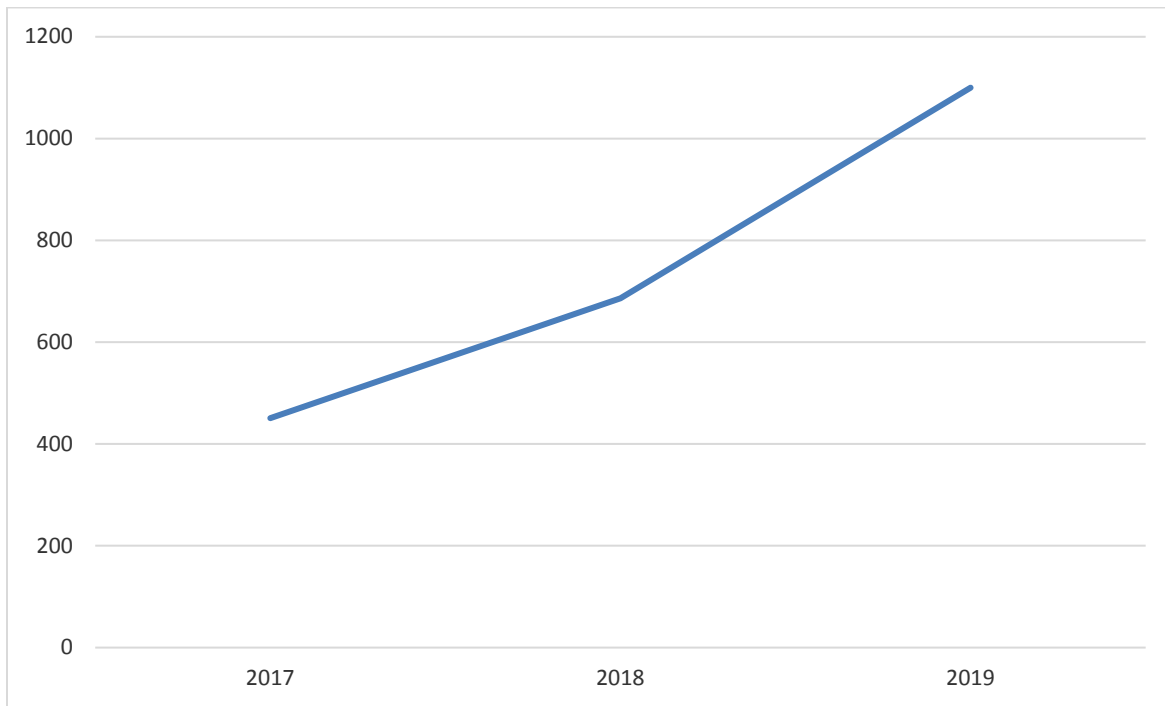
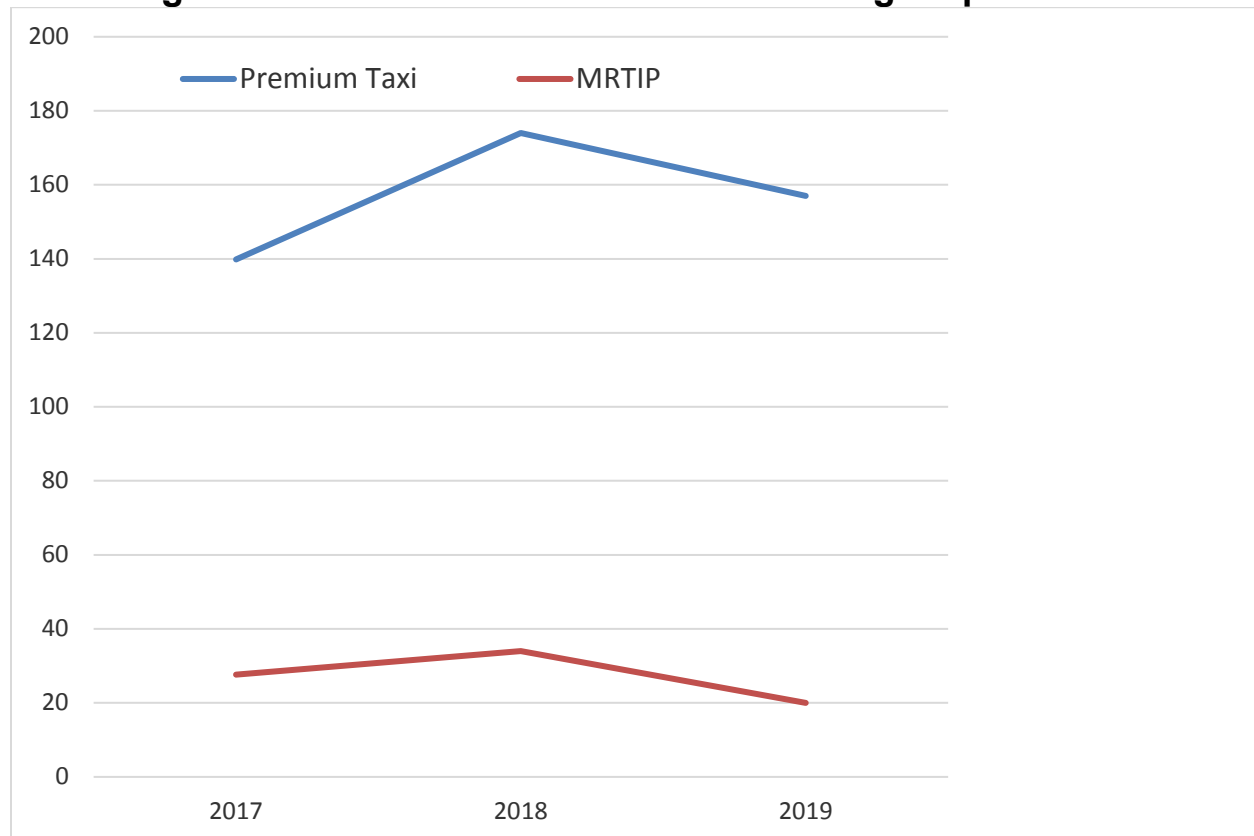
Discussion

The City of Alameda Transportation Program Plan for Seniors and People with Disabilities for fiscal year 2020-21 is recommended to total \$497,000, which is about \$47,000 less than this current fiscal year budget. In January 2017, staff hired a part-time paratransit coordinator – Victoria Williams – to ensure that this specialized transportation program for seniors and people with disabilities is implemented effectively and best meets customer needs.

2019 Program Highlights

More community members are using the Alameda Loop Shuttle and the free bus passes provided to Alameda Point Collaborative and Alameda Housing Authority qualifying residents and the group trips remain stable. Due to driver shortages and competition from Uber/Lyft services, the taxi program has struggled with reliability issues and reduced usage in the later part of the year. A status summary is as follows:

- **Alameda Loop Shuttle:** As of October 31, 2017, two new shuttle buses began running with a 30-minute frequency – as opposed to the previous one-hour frequency – and a rebranded service began with bike racks and wheelchair lifts. As a result, the ridership has grown from 450 monthly boardings to 1,100 monthly boardings (Figure 1). Furthermore, the average cost of the shuttle is \$12 per trip, which is under the required maximum of \$20 per trip specified in Alameda CTC's *Paratransit Program Implementation Guidelines*.
- **Free Bus Passes:** Since 2017, qualifying residents living in Alameda Point Collaborative's 167 units receive free bus passes. In 2019, the City and Alameda Housing Authority also established a partnership for qualifying residents to obtain free bus passes at their facilities such as Anne B Diament Plaza. Qualifying residents must show proof of their low-income status and must be seniors or people with disabilities.
- **Discounted Taxis:** The taxi program usage has dropped from providing over 200 monthly trips in 2018 to only providing an average of 140 monthly trips in the last few months of the year causing trips to average \$30 per trip (Figure 2). A total of 32 people have applied for a scholarship to the taxi program, and \$272 of taxi vouchers were provided at no charge to scholarship recipients.
- **Group Trips:** In 2019, the group trip program provided 1,119 one-way trips, which is about the same amount of service as in 2018 totaling 627 one-way trips for the Mastick monthly trips, 156 one-way trips for the annual Skilled Nursing Facility picnic in September and 336 one-way trips for the bi-weekly Leisure Club.
- **Outreach:** In 2019, staff delivered shuttle schedules to key stakeholders, presented program information to community members, hung the cross street banner, advertised services in the Alameda Sun and Mastick Senior Center newsletter and at the Alameda Theatre, listed services in the City Recreation Guides, issued a press release on the annual survey and tabled at events.

Figure 1: Alameda Loop Shuttle – Boardings per Month**Figure 2: Alameda Taxi Services – Passengers per Month**

Proposed Program for Seniors and People with Disabilities

This section describes the City's proposed transportation program for seniors and people with disabilities for fiscal year 2020-2021. In general, City staff is recommending the same program as previous years except with the recommended elimination of the taxi program and the expansion of free bus passes and door-through-door services. City staff recommends expanding the scholarship program so that more Alamedans can obtain free AC Transit bus passes and also recommends providing funds to door-through-door service providers to assist Alameda's most frail community members. City staff considered but is not recommending Uber/Lyft type services due to labor and accessibility issues. Other local jurisdictions are exploring the use of Lyft/Uber, and City staff is monitoring their progress for potential future use in Alameda. Additionally, the Alameda CTC is funding an emergency wheelchair program and travel training at a countywide level, which are available to Alamedans.

The fiscal year 2020-2021 plan is being developed with input from key stakeholders and program participants by conducting a survey in December and by reaching out to four City Commissions: Commission on Disability (January 8), Recreation and Parks Commission (January 9), Transportation Commission (January 22), and Social Service Human Relations Board (January 22).

Alameda Loop Shuttle (\$180,000, a \$15,000 increase from last year): Website: www.AlamedaLoopShuttle.com In 2010, the Alameda Paratransit Shuttle service began with the goal of reducing motor vehicle trips by seniors and people with disabilities and reducing the dependence on the subsidized taxi services within the City. In October 2017, the shuttle was rebranded as the Alameda Loop Shuttle with increased frequency to every 30 minutes. The shuttle service is open to the public yet the primary purpose of the shuttle is to serve people with disabilities and seniors by providing access to shopping destinations and medical facilities around the City. The drivers 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 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. The shuttle routes are as follows:

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

Recommended changes: Staff recommends providing the same service and also exploring the use of and possibly purchasing real-time technology that allows staff and riders to view the real-time location of the shuttle buses.

Subsidized Taxi Service (Proposed to Discontinue; Currently at \$80,000): The City provides two different subsidized taxi services in sedans or lift-equipped vans.

Recommended changes: Staff recommends terminating the discounted taxi service. The City's primary goals are twofold: to provide consistent, high quality taxi service to enrolled riders, and to ensure that public monies and Measures B and BB paratransit funds are being used in a cost efficient manner. Over the last several years, the taxi program level of service and reliability have continued to decrease while the costs of City subsidies have increased, resulting in higher per-ride costs.

City staff has met with the taxi provider - 1st American Transit - for the last several years to discuss these concerns so as to maintain its longstanding relationship with 1st American Transit, which is the only taxi company that has responded to the City's competitive request for proposal efforts. Earlier this year, at 1st American Transit's request, the City agreed to increase the monthly compensation for fiscal year 2019-20 from \$5,000 per month to \$6,000 per month to address driver shortage issues. At the same time, the City agreed to decrease service hours, from 7 days a week (Monday through Friday, 6am - 9pm, and weekends, 9am - 7pm) to 5 days a week (Monday through Friday, 8am - 5pm, with no evening or weekend service hours).

With these modifications, the number of total rides has declined in the last few months of 2019, resulting in higher per-ride costs to the City. In 2018, 1st American Transit provided an average of 208 subsidized taxi rides per month, at a cost of \$17 per ride. In the last few months of 2019, 1st American Transit provided an average of 140 rides per month, at a cost of \$30 per ride.

Based on discussions with 1st American Transit, the decreasing levels of service are directly correlated to a shortage in available taxi drivers, which leads to ride denials. While City staff continue to receive positive comments about the work of individual drivers, as ride denials increase, the number of rides decrease and the number of complaints and the overall program costs increase. Same Day service availability is severely impacted by the need to pre-schedule taxi rides a day in advance to secure these rides.

Group Trips (\$25,000, a \$10,000 decrease 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, 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.

Recommended changes: Staff recommends providing the same services. The part-time driver is now covered under “program management” and the cost of the Crown Memorial Annual Skilled Nursing Facility picnic is lower than budgeted in previous years.

Scholarship Program – Free AC Transit Bus Passes (\$85,000, a \$51,000 increase from last year): The City provides free AC Transit bus passes to seniors and people with disabilities residing in Alameda Point Collaborative, which is a low-income, supportive housing community in Alameda Point, and residing in Alameda Housing Authority properties that focus on low-income seniors or people with disabilities such as Anne B. Diamant Plaza and Everett Commons. Qualifying residents must show proof of their low-income status. The low-income requirement for household income should not exceed 50 percent area median income.

Recommended changes: Staff recommends increasing free AC Transit bus passes for more Alameda Housing Authority qualifying residents such as in Independence Plaza and expanding the free bus pass program to qualifying members of Mastick Senior Center and Jack Capon Villa, which is affordable housing for adults with developmental disabilities.

Door-thru-Door Transportation Service (\$15,000, an increase of \$15,000 – NEW Service): To better serve the City’s most frail community members, City staff recommends funding LIFE Elder Care or another non-profit door-through-door provider to supplement service that they already provide in Alameda. These non-profit, door-through-door providers, which offer escorted transportation services, are often challenged in finding volunteer drivers so these funds could be used to help pay for drivers.

Recommended changes: Staff recommends providing monies to door-through-door services in Alameda as a new service provided with Measures B/BB paratransit monies from Alameda.

Capital Investments (\$100,000, a decrease of \$20,000): The capital program allows staff to spend down the funding balance in a fiscally responsible way with one-time investments that will not have an on-going, long-term impact on the program’s operational budget. Staff recommends that the capital budget cover the cost of adding new bus benches and ensuring compliance with ADA at bus stops.

Recommended changes: Staff recommends reducing the capital investments budget compared to previous years due to the success at spending down reserves.

Customer Service and Outreach (\$33,000, a decrease of \$5,000): The outreach program includes distributing shuttle schedules, program materials, informational mailings and press releases, advertising in the Alameda Sun and at Alameda Theatre, listing services in the quarterly City Recreation Guides, hanging the cross street banner that promotes the Alameda Loop Shuttle, presenting at Mastick Senior Center

transportation program orientations and with other community members, assisting with the issuance of Clipper cards to seniors or people with disabilities and tabling at events. As a service to East Bay Paratransit customers in the City of Alameda, staff also sells East Bay Paratransit tickets.

Recommended changes: Staff recommends a lower outreach budget than the current fiscal year since the campaign to promote the more frequent and improved branding of the shuttle service is occurring in the current fiscal year.

Program Management (\$57,500, a decrease of \$9,000): The management component funds the part-time paratransit coordinator and the group trip driver as well as on-call experts. 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 new contracts and programs, conducting outreach meetings and other outreach activities, and coordinating with transportation providers and City staff.

Recommended changes: The lower budget amount is estimated since staff is not needing additional consultant time to transition to an Uber/Lyft program.

Financial Impact

The Transportation Services - Paratransit Program Application (Fund 287, Program 4225287), as outlined above, totals \$497,000. The program will be funded from the following sources (all at projected amounts): Alameda CTC Measure B/BB paratransit annual funding allocation (\$397,568) and fund balance (\$99,432). The remaining unallocated funds, which are expected to total about \$81,600, will be placed as a funding balance 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 transportation program for seniors and people with disabilities 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 City of Alameda transportation program plan for seniors and people with disabilities for fiscal year 2020/2021.

Respectfully submitted by,

Gail Payne

Senior Transportation Coordinator

Jackie Krause
Recreation Manager

Victoria Williams
Paratransit Coordinator

Exhibit

- 1: Presentation
- 2: Survey Results