



Date: June 1, 2017
To: Patrick H. West, City Manager *T.M.*
From: Kelly Colopy, Director of Health and Human Services *KC*
For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: Long Beach Safe Parking Program Feasibility Study

In October 2016, the Long Beach City Council requested a report on the feasibility of implementing a "Safe Parking" program such as those found in the cities of Santa Barbara and Monterey Bay. The main goals of a safe parking program are to move individuals who are residing in their cars, off of the street and into safe parking spaces, while simultaneously connecting them to basic essential services and making the connection to social service programs to transition them into permanent housing.

This memorandum provides a report that includes a review of best practices from other cities; identifies the basic essential services that would need to be provided at each location; and, provides program options and costs. Given the goal of any such program is to provide only temporary parking, the parties working on this project have renamed the effort "transitional parking" to emphasize that permanent housing is the ultimate goal for participants.

The 2017 citywide homeless count identified 1,863 people experiencing homelessness, including 85 people living in their vehicles.

To find best practices for this type of program, staff contacted representatives of several agencies operating safe parking programs, including:

- Seattle, WA (Road to Housing)
- Monterey, CA (One Starfish Parking Program)
- Santa Barbara, CA (New Beginnings)
- Ventura, CA (Safe Sleep Program)
- San Diego, CA (Dreams for Change)

Staff also gathered additional information from the City of Long Beach Homeless Services Division, various faith-based organizations, and a comprehensive review of websites, articles, press releases, brochures, and other reports.

SAFE PARKING PROGRAMS

Like Long Beach, communities up and down the West Coast are experiencing housing shortages that have thwarted efforts to house low-income persons. In 2016, rental vacancy rates were 2.7 percent in Los Angeles and 3.9 percent in Seattle. In Long Beach, the current situation is worse, with the current vacancy rate hovering around 2 percent. A number of impacted communities have implemented so-called "safe parking" programs dating back to 2004, with a significant increase in the last five to seven years. As vacancy rates continue to

decrease, and subsidy vouchers expire due to lack of inventory, these programs have become one way that communities seek to address the limited availability of housing stock.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) estimates that taxpayers pay about \$40,000 per-year for every single unsheltered person who is experiencing homelessness. That covers expenses like emergency room fees, social services, and law enforcement and emergency services interaction. The annual cost of transitional parking programs ranges between \$22,000 and \$360,000, serving 25 to 500 people.

All cities, including Long Beach, have some form of parking ordinance that prohibits overnight parking by occupied cars. Some communities aggressively ticket offenders. Seattle has a “scofflaw ordinance” that allows cars that have been ticketed four times to be immobilized with a mechanical boot, towed, and auctioned off, if the tickets remain unpaid. The increase in similar ordinances, coupled with limited affordable housing availability, has led to the creation of many programs on the West Coast to address vehicular homelessness and find ways to create safe spaces for these individuals to sleep while increasing their access to services and programs that will move them into permanent housing.

REVIEW OF BEST PRACTICES

There are key similarities between the five safe parking programs studied:

- All programs have the goal of transitioning people from residing in their cars to permanent housing by giving them a safe place to sleep, providing case management that connects them to services, and setting up a plan to move them to permanent housing.
- All programs are run by a non-profit agency and utilize a combination of community faith-based programs, non-profits, private businesses, and city/county resources to supply the parking spots for clients.
- All programs report a well-developed relationship with the local police department.
- All but one of the programs operate only during the evening to early morning hours.
- Most programs do not allow RV parking as a part of their service.

Road to Housing Program – Seattle, Washington:

The Compass Housing Alliance began its Road to Housing Program in 2012 with the strategy of connecting campers with safe, legal parking spots, while providing case management to help them find more stable living situations. The program is funded at \$30,000 per month (\$360,000 annually), which primarily covers the cost of four personnel and some sanitation costs. The program employs one program manager, one outreach specialist, and two case managers. Case management staff meets with clients every other week at the lots. Each of the case managers utilizes a tablet and a mobile hotspot to ensure that clients are entered into the local Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Since its inception, 256 individuals have been housed. The program housed 119 individuals in 2015, while last year

it only housed 40 when a city state of emergency refocused the program on the chronic homeless population.

The program offers a total of 26 spots spread over four lots. Faith-based organizations operate three of the lots and one is city-owned. Two of the congregations have two spots each and one offers seven. An RV-only city lot houses 15 RVs in an industrial area. Overflow into the surrounding area does not seem to be a problem in the church lots, as the residential areas are more heavily policed. At one time, the program experimented with a large lot rented from a utility company. The lot provided 25 spaces, but was prohibitively expensive and had to be abandoned.

Funding for sanitation in the lots is predominantly provided through program funds. Portable toilets are placed in each of the lots for use by clients. There is one church that has a designated restroom for clients to utilize. This is possible because the restroom is accessible from outside of the church and does not require interior church access.

The program initially used a fenced lot with 25 spaces and hired a security firm to monitor the lot at night. After six months, however, this approach was rejected because it was not cost effective or necessary. Each participant is given program guidelines they must follow to remain in the lots. Clients in these lots tend to naturally take over the space, form a community and "self-police," ensuring the safety of their community from within. The program continues to utilize this approach, as it is cost effective and empowering for participants.

One Starfish Parking Program – Monterey, California:

The One Starfish Parking Program has been in operation since 2014 with the goal of providing safe parking and support services for homeless women. It has served 75 people since the program began, approximately 25 per year. A faith-based group, We Help Homeless Women/Pass the Word Ministry, provides the majority of the program's \$100,000 annual budget. As of 2016, a portion of the funding, \$21,500, comes directly from the City of Monterey.

The program operates five lots (four faith-based and one city-owned) with 27 spots that are located throughout the Monterey Peninsula. Some of the facilities allow one or two RVs at a time, but they must be less than 34 feet long. While this program's target demographic is female, it has recently broadened its scope to include married couples and single men. In order to accommodate these new populations, the program has designated separate lots to accommodate these populations. No children are served in this program.

The program operator also distributes items such as sleeping bags and gas cards. This program does not have any formal connection or work with any city or regional programs that report into an HMIS system. Case managers have an office at the church facility that they use at no charge. Case managers refer clients to local non-profits who have shower or food programs, and to the local Salvation Army. The program provides job and housing referrals obtained from other non-profits. Clients may also receive a once-per-month visit with a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT) that works with the program.

New Beginnings Program – Santa Barbara, California:

The New Beginnings Program has operated since 2004 with an annual budget of \$270,000 from city, county, state, federal, and private funding sources. The program has a capacity of 129 spaces on 23 different lots. A majority of the locations have between five to seven spots, four lots have ten, and one lot has 15. The lot providers in this program are a mix of faith-based, local non-profits, small businesses, and city and county locations. Since its inception, the program has served 763 individuals, 272 of those in the 2015-2016 fiscal year (the most recent year for which data is available).

The program is directly connected to the Santa Barbara system of care. All participants are entered into the local HMIS system and, in the last several years, HUD Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing funds have been utilized to provide street outreach and housing. Clients must come into the program office no less than once per month to work on their permanent housing objectives. Permits for the lots are issued for a 30-day period, but there are no limits to renewals to ensure that each participant has ample time to transition to permanent housing. The program also contracts with the local food bank to distribute over 300 pounds of food each week. Until last year, a special grant allowed distribution of gas cards to clients. The program also engages in extensive street outreach, providing lunch and resource guides to clients.

Safe Sleep Program – Ventura, California:

The Safe Sleep Program, managed by the Salvation Army, began in 2004 and operates on an annual budget of \$22,000. This budget helps cover the costs of a program manager and a case manager that work out of the Salvation Army's homeless services program. Other costs of the program are borne by various faith-based organizations that participate. The program operates two lots owned by faith-based organizations with a combined 15 spots. This program serves 50 clients per year with highly leveraged resources from the lead agency.

Notably, the program is strict about residency requirements and requires proof that the last residence of record is in the City (not County) of Ventura. Clients must agree to case management once per week in the program office. Clients who fail to show up are removed from the program. The program's main goal is to stabilize income and provide resources. Once income is established, clients are promptly transitioned into permanent housing. The case manager issues permits for a 90-day period, which can only be renewed if the client makes progress toward his or her goals.

Dreams for Change – San Diego, California:

The Dreams for Change Program is privately funded, operating on a \$55,000 annual budget. It provides 38 spaces on a church lot and an additional 40 spaces at the San Diego Jewish Family Services facility. The program serves 200 cars containing some 500 people, mostly families, per year. While the cost per family is low, this annual budget is highly leveraged by other funding received through performance contracts from the Achieving Financial Independence, Thrive San Diego, and Eating Better Today programs. The use of part-time workers and interns from local universities helps to leverage the cost of case management.

The program provides three part-time case managers who float between the two sites between 5:50 p.m. and 9:30 p.m., every evening. The case managers work out of vans equipped with tables, computers, printers, and canopies. Case managers refer clients to access points to the regional system of care, but are not able to access HMIS systems directly. Case managers find that clients are able to access resources, but despite having vouchers, they are not able to access housing. There is no length-of-stay limit, but they will expel clients who do not show a willingness to work toward permanent housing.

The program has the largest parking sites of any of the programs studied. The program promotes community and provides built-in safety and security for the lot. Better mental health outcomes are also observed as a result of exposure to others in the same situation and the ability to share resources.

Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority – Los Angeles, California:

Additionally, the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) is currently in the process of investigating the issue of safe parking. They have issued a Request for Information from qualified partners that are interested in, and qualified to provide, Safe Parking Pilot Program services. The current proposal is for information gathering on capacity and may be used for further investigation. This information may also lead LAHSA to take no further action on the issue.

As with other safe parking programs, the intent behind LAHSA's program would be to connect homeless individuals to service providers and case management utilizing a Coordinated Entry System (CES). The scope of required services includes: experience serving the designated population, experience operating similar programs, the geographic area to be covered, and the plans to communicate program objectives to the target population. The plan must include connecting clients to the CES, which is similar to the Long Beach system of care.

Currently, publication of the LAHSA plan has not been developed or released. Further updates will be available at a future date.

BASIC ESSENTIAL SERVICES AND RELATED ISSUES

Hours of Operation: All but one program is open for a 12-hour period, 7 days per week. Clients can enter the lots between 6:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m., and must leave the following morning between 6:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m. The one exception from this system is Seattle, which allows the lots to be open 24 hours a day. This expanded access allows for intensive case management, with each client being visited by a case manager at least once per week. This is a cost-intensive program that employs four case managers for outreach and direct client contact.

Program Screening: Lot screening procedures are similar in nature. Most lots require clients to provide a current driver's license, current automobile registration, and proof of liability insurance. Most programs also screen for sex offenders, and felons with recent violent crimes. One program will not accept clients convicted of "cooking meth."

Another component of client screening involves residency in the city or county where the program is housed. The Monterey and Ventura programs only accept clients whose most recent residence is in their city. Others are not as strict, but are looking for participants who are from the local area. Most programs accept self-reporting for this element. San Diego does not have a requirement of this nature, but reports that 70 percent of their clients come from San Diego County, and 20 percent come from other California cities. None of the programs reported they felt as if participants were drawn to their cities as a result of the availability of their program.

Case Management: All programs researched had extensive case management components. Most programs have a non-profit “lead agency” that supplies case management and helps connect clients to other local programs and services. Case management check-in ranges from weekly to monthly. Two of the programs have case managers that visit clients on site. It should be noted that neither of these programs is directly connected to a larger continuum of care system in their cities. All programs emphasized that participation in the case management component was a strict rule of the program, and clients who are not actively working toward the goal of permanent housing are removed from the program.

Sanitation: With few exceptions, sanitation costs for programs are borne by project funding. Delivering and maintaining portable toilets is a costly, but necessary, part of all safe parking programs. On some occasions, the host location is able to provide a restroom facility, but this only works if the restroom is accessible from the outside. There is a risk of portable toilets being used by people other than those in the program, but this was not mentioned as highly problematic for any of the programs. Placing the toilets away from streets and other easy access points keeps usage to lot patrons only.

Depending on the populations they encountered, some sites made sure to offer a handicapped restroom facility. This was not necessarily for ADA compliance, but rather to fulfill the needs of a certain client base. Some sites were not able to have portable sanitation onsite for various reasons. These sites simply referred clients to a nearby gas station or fast food facility. This approach, however, was only utilized by locations that had one or two spaces and, even then, it is difficult for the nearby businesses.

Security: The issue of security for these programs has generally not been as substantial as might be expected. Clients in lots tend to naturally take over the space and “self-police,” ensuring the safety of their community from within. When issues do arise, the programs report that law enforcement is very responsive.

Different methodologies also serve to enhance security. In San Diego, for example, the case managers are on-site at each of the lots every-other-day from 5:30 to 9:30 p.m. This provides oversight and management of residents. Before the case managers leave, one of the residents is a designated “night person” who can help with any issues. This role rotates, with many clients proudly taking part. Both of the San Diego sites have gated facilities, which also aid in security.

Santa Barbara, a program with 23 different lots, employs two site monitors who make several rounds per night. They tag non-authorized vehicles and ask them to follow-up with staff to register with the program. They also provide a night emergency number for clients to use

when problems arise. They have not had a big problem with neighbor complaints in business areas. Residential areas are more of a challenge, but not a consistent problem. The program coordinator feels that the individuals living in cars are easier to work with because they are usually higher functioning, have some form of employment, and are less likely to be challenged by mental health issues.

Length of Client Stay: Most programs designate 30 to 90 days for initial permits. With the exception of Ventura, which is limited at one-year. None of the programs exited people who could not find housing within a certain time frame. Most programs reported success in housing clients within nine to twelve months, but admit the timeframe is lengthening due to the crisis in market rate housing availability. All programs are typically wait-listed.

Adverse Possession: The issue of “squatting”, or adverse possession, was discussed for each of the programs. None have had any clients who attempted to use adverse possession as a basis to remain in a parking lot. There has been friction with clients who do not want to leave in the morning, but these issues have always been resolved by close monitoring and discussion with caseworkers. If necessary, any legal issues raised by the risk of adverse possession would be best analyzed by the City Attorney.

Other Concerns: Each agency was asked whether safe parking lots create magnets for both vehicular and non-vehicular persons. Many of the programs are in more outlying areas and have not experienced any significant problems in this regard. San Diego, which identified the largest problem, has the largest lots in predominantly urban areas. Case managers work with non-participants to identify and refer them to alternative resources. If non-participants do not respond, law enforcement will cite the offender. Most “overflow” vehicles promptly leave the area once approached.

Lot location is an essential component of any program. Clients need access to areas that will protect and empower, not further destabilize. Multiple program coordinators cautioned to take the time to put together the best program available, both for the clients and the surrounding community. Faith-based agencies, business lots, and other non-profit organizations are potential partners for this type of program, although it should be noted that most programs studied are heavily reliant on faith-based partnerships.

Notably, RV and car inhabitants are viewed as different types of populations. A large percentage of car inhabitants are employed, but do not earn enough to secure housing at market rates. This population is eager to find housing and is only using a vehicle as a temporary solution. Those in RVs are often working in better paying jobs, but see living in RVs as being “housed” and not homeless. Programs that provide special lots for RVs tend to relegate them to industrial areas away from other resources. This is one type of lot that can tend to have a “magnet” effect because people who cannot get into the program still want to be a part of the community. RVs placed in car lots seem to be best tolerated if only smaller units (less than 34 feet) are allowed and they are limited to one or two per lot.

ISSUES REGARDING FUNDING

Program funding for these programs range between \$22,000 and \$360,000 annually. It is difficult to establish an exact cost per individual client as each of these programs leverages

their funding differently. For stand-alone programs, such as Road to Housing in Seattle, an annual \$360,000 budget provides the full-cost of four full-time employees who engage in all aspects of case management and outreach. These case managers are the point of contact for all client engagement with programs and funding that is done through the program. Other programs utilize their case managers to refer clients to other available resources outside of the program at a much lower cost. This difference in approach results in the wide range of costs. Programs serve as an access point to a robust coordinated system of care and are not burdened with the high cost of delivering the service.

FEASIBILITY OF A LONG BEACH PROGRAM

The Long Beach CoC is organized through the Multi-Service Center (MSC), which is an integrated and coordinated system that provides all of the services needed to help participants move into stable housing. Over a dozen partner agencies operate at the MSC, working together to holistically address the needs of those accessing the center. The strong relationship between all of the partners in the CoC means that clients, each with their own unique set of needs, have access to a system that is designed to identify the appropriate services for each household.

For clients who may not have access to the MSC and its resources, a well-executed transitional parking program could provide access to a robust system that could help take care of immediate needs as well as help find more permanent solutions. Unlike some programs in the study, any transitional program in Long Beach could be fully integrated into the CoC system of care, thus maximizing resources and improving outcomes for those experiencing vehicular homelessness. The Safe Parking program would require full fiscal support to meet its goals and objectives. The Safe Parking program model is not eligible for funding under Continuum of Care and Emergency Solution Grants, and would require a new funding source. Safe Parking programs are not currently an allowable use of Measure H funds.

Representatives from the Health Department, Second District Council Office, and nine faith-based agencies met in March 2016 to determine the interest and feasibility of utilizing local church parking lots for a Long Beach transitional parking program. This initial meeting was a forum for the faith-based agencies to ask questions and get an initial feel about how a transitional parking program might operate in Long Beach. It was also an opportunity for representatives to determine how many spaces might be available and what services and programs churches were already providing.

- Initial findings indicated that faith-based agencies interested in participating were willing to host two to five cars at a time.
- All agencies indicated they would need to have portable toilet facilities provided at their location for client use.
- Services available at faith-based agencies range from weekly food pantries to community meals. Some churches also indicated they host Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous meetings.
- Faith-based agencies indicated the need to educate their congregations and surrounding communities about the real issues of homelessness and how to work with

them. They also indicated enthusiasm for learning how to better utilize the City's MSC and its available programs.

- There will be a cost to some of the congregations as they currently rent out vacant parking spaces.
- Some congregations are already "letting" cars park overnight in their lots to assist individuals who are in need.

Program coordinators from the study advised that each faith-based community is going to have a different threshold for client interaction. Some congregations are comfortable providing meals and clothing to clients on a regular basis. Others look at needs on a client-to-client basis, helping with things ranging from school supplies to gas cards. Many of their programs do a Holiday collection for clients. Program Coordinators cautioned that strong boundaries should be put into place at the beginning of the program. Congregations that jump in and try to provide too many services can become compassion-fatigued and quickly drain the life out of the program. These recommendations from other programs should be taken into account for any program developed.

As existing programs demonstrate, there are a variety of methods to implement a safe or transitional parking program. Although stand-alone programs comprise much of the study, Long Beach is uniquely positioned to utilize a transitional program as an entry point into an already robust coordinated system of programs and services.

FISCAL IMPACT

The proposed budget for a Safe Parking program in Long Beach would consist of three main categories: personnel, operations and indirect costs. The total estimated cost of the proposed program is \$220,942, and includes:

- Personnel expenses are estimated at \$112,500, and would support one full-time Outreach Worker, one full-time Case Manager, and a portion of supervising staff salary. This cost estimate is based on an average cost for non-profit agencies who currently subcontract with the City.
- Operations and supplies comprise a total of \$88,356, which will fund costs relating to security, sanitation and refuse costs, program supplies, parking lot rental, supplies for incentives, and technology supports for reporting outcomes.
- Standard indirect costs for subcontracted agencies is capped at 10 percent, a total of \$20,086.

The proposed program is not an allowable funding category under the Continuum of Care Emergency Solution Grants, or Measure H funding.

If funded, the program would be a 12-month pilot that is coordinated with faith-based and community partners. During the pilot program phase, up to 20 parking spaces among lots could be used. Each site would be equipped with Porta-Potties and provide enhanced refuse collection service. A participant's stay in the program is contingent upon participation in case management and progress on their individual housing plan.

A Letter of Interest (LOI) to solicit potential community partners for program implementation could be used. If sufficient interest is expressed, a Request for Proposals (RFP) would be issued to select a provider. The RFP would determine the potential locations and number of spots available.

The RFP process would include information to identify partners that:

- Have experience serving people experiencing homelessness;
- Have experience working with street homeless populations;
- Have experience operating similar programs;
- Are willing to work with other agencies to determine appropriate sites for parking, including faith-based organizations, privately-held facilities and government-owned properties;
- Are able to communicate the program to the target population;
- Will connect participants to the MSC and Coordinated Entry System as a condition of program participation;
- Enforce eligibility requirements of participants as required by HUD and the Homeless Services Division; and,
- Participate in the citywide Street Outreach Network.

Health and Human Services staff would also work with the City Attorney and Development Services to ensure there is an appropriate legal framework that allows for overnight dwelling in faith-based, non-profit and City lots. Staff will work with these same personnel to develop a streamlined permitting process to allow for non-profit and faith-based organizations to opt-in as lot providers while the program is being developed.

For additional information please contact Shannon Parker, Homeless Services Officer, at (562) 570-4581.

CC: TOM MODICA, ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER
ANITRA DEMPSEY, INTERIM DEPUTY CITY MANAGER
ROBERT LUNA, CHIEF OF POLICE
AMY J. BODEK, DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
CRAIG BECK, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS
MARIE KNIGHT, DIRECTOR OF PARKS, RECREATION AND MARINE
REBECCA JIMENEZ, ASSISTANT TO THE CITY MANAGER
CITY CLERK (REF. FILE #16-0938)