



**Board Report**

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**Agenda Number:** 21.

**OPERATIONS, SAFETY & CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE  
EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE  
JANUARY 20, 2022**

**SUBJECT: METRO’S HOMELESS OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT - AMENDMENT NO. 5 TO THE LETTER OF AGREEMENT WITH THE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES (DHS)**

**ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATION**

**RECOMMENDATION**

AUTHORIZE the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to execute Amendment Number 5 (Amendment No. 5) to the Letter of Agreement for Multidisciplinary Street-based Engagement Services with the County Department of Health Services (DHS) to include additional funding in the amount of \$1,470,000 for the extension of the emergency-shelter program funding through June 30, 2022.

**ISSUE**

Metro has partnered with LA County’s Department of Health Services (DHS) to establish and implement a comprehensive homeless outreach and engagement program since 2017. This partnership is codified in a Letter of Agreement (LOA) between Metro and DHS. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, in March 2021, Metro initiated a partnership with an emergency shelter (Home at Last - HAL) to provide short-term housing for up to 80 clients engaged on the Metro system. The agreement to provide the pilot short-term housing expires January 31, 2022. Staff recommends that the Board authorize the CEO to amend the agreement through execution of Amendment No. 5 to increase funding to address the continued need for emergency-shelter services during the current Covid-19 spike through June 30, 2022.

**BACKGROUND**

LAHSA conducts an annual point-in-time count throughout the entire county. According to the 2020 count, there were 48,041 individuals surveyed who were unsheltered. Comparing Metro’s counts to the LAHSA county-wide count, Metro serves approximately 3.1% or 1,490 of the unsheltered population, who may seek shelter on our system.

Metro has invested resources and developed a comprehensive outreach strategy to fill in the gaps

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that exist in the Los Angeles Continuum of Care by connecting homeless individuals on Metro's system with adequate health, social and supportive housing services. To-date, the outreach efforts have been successful in connecting riders experiencing homelessness with much-needed support services and housing options. From 2017, over 5,300 individuals have been engaged by PATH teams, nearly half have been connected with interim housing. Over 500 individuals have been permanently housed through Metro's work with DHS/PATH.

Metro and DHS consulted with PATH on an interim solution - a pilot program to temporarily increase short-term shelter bed availability in Metro's service area. In February 2021, HAL operated as a DHS -designated emergency COVID shelter location that was set to close. It is a communal living facility with beds for single adult males and females. There is also personal property storage at the facility. The shelter is located in South Los Angeles at 7900 S Western Avenue.

To provide PATH outreach teams with additional shelter bed availability to quickly match individuals with interim/emergency shelter, Metro initiated a dedicated homeless shelter bed pilot program from March 01, 2021 to January 2022, with the Home At Last (HAL) emergency shelter, through the existing agreement with DHS. HAL's program includes full supportive services for residents in a secure facility, including specialized programming for those impacted by mental health crises and addiction, regular counseling, meals, laundry, showers, basic skills training, medical care, transportation to medical appointments, assessments and housing-ready documentation assistance, and daily activities for residents.

## **DISCUSSION**

Metro initiated a pilot program to temporarily increase short-term shelter bed availability in Metro's service area through the Home At Last (HAL) emergency shelter. The pilot program will expire January 31, 2022.

This partnership allows for Metro to reserve access eighty (80) beds and supportive wrap-around shelter resources for single women, men, and individuals who identify as transgender for clients referred by PATH teams. Within two weeks of the program's inception, the majority of the beds were filled. In November 2021 60% of the beds were in use.

During the pilot program from March to the close of November 2021, PATH referred 345 people experiencing homelessness to the HAL Shelter. Metro staff tracks the relevant data for usage, housing placement, service referrals and program operating and administrative costs. The preliminary evaluation of the HAL program shows that 26% of individuals placed at the facility were connected with long-term housing placements through family reunification, moving to a higher supportive care facility, other interim housing programs and permanent housing. The average occupancy is between 50-67 individuals and the average length of stay for a client is 31 days at the HAL emergency shelter. While at HAL clients are eligible to participate in HAL's specialized program of support. They receive access to a number of services including mental health and addiction support.

The data also shows that a vast majority of individuals who are placed at HAL exit the facility and are not given permanent housing placements. The individuals we have served through this program are single men and women of varying ages, with varying mental and physical medical needs. The clients

referred to HAL include 20 percent who identify as female, 79 percent who identify as male and less than 1 percent identify as transgender/non-binary.

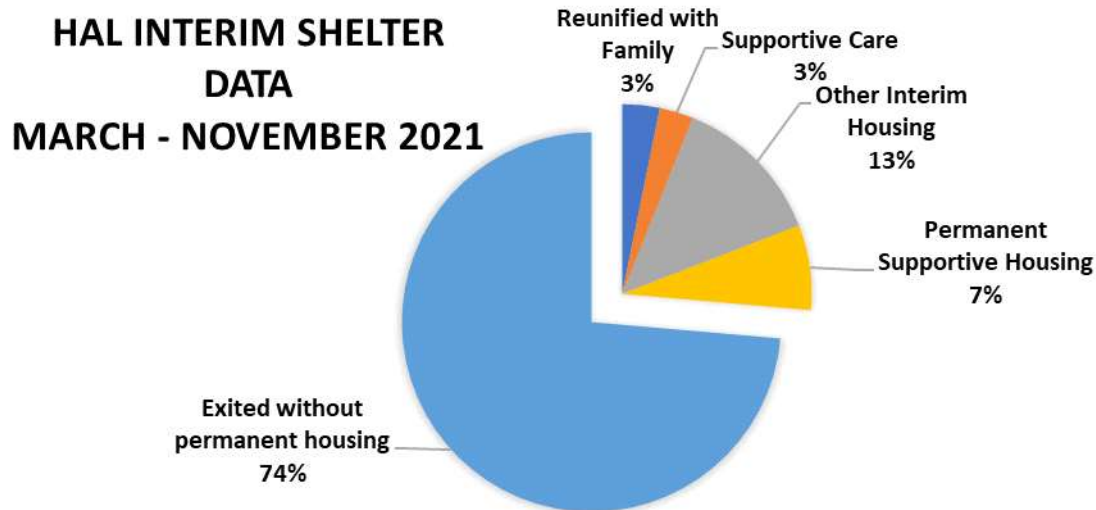


Figure 1. HAL Interim Shelter Data - March - November 2021

Staff’s preliminary evaluation of the HAL emergency shelter program shows that the program should be continued through June 30, 2022 due to the increase in COVID-19 cases. The need for emergency shelter beds goes beyond what Metro can provide through the HAL partnership.

The staff recommendation to extend the interim shelter program at Home At Last (HAL) was presented to PSAC at their meeting on January 5, 2022. PSAC unanimously voted to support the extension of the Home At Last program until June 30, 2022 (Attachment B). PSAC also voted to support several additional recommendations for Metro’s Homeless outreach program. Metro is pursuing a consultant to provide a comprehensive analysis with recommendations for how Metro should best structure its homeless outreach programs that will consider the committee’s input.

Challenges to the Emergency Shelter Pilot Program

Due to the communal living quarters at the Home At Last shelter location if a COVID outbreak occurs the shelter implements strict quarantine protocols. During those quarantine time periods PATH outreach teams cannot refer any individuals to HAL for shelter. Quarantine periods were mandated during September, October, November and December 2021 and placements were lower during those periods than in other months.

Long term funding continues to be a challenge. While the HAL program provides valuable positive benefits to the individuals it serves, the pilot has not yielded visible results in reducing the number of unhoused individuals on Metro’s system. Because Metro does not have access to social service funding, this pilot program is funded using scarce transit operations dollars. The cities, county and state of California have record amounts of funding for housing and resources to end homelessness. Currently, transit agencies, including Metro are not eligible to be a direct recipient of those funds.

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From the Vision 2028 strategic plan staff notes that partnerships like the model Metro has established with DHS/PATH are beneficial - but they are not sufficient at addressing the broader challenges, including homelessness. Partnerships with other public, private, and non-profit organizations are essential to identify and implement effective solutions. Leveraging partnerships, Metro can take deliberate steps to lead where it has the authority, offer guidance where it provides funding, and support others where there are additional opportunities to shape outcomes that benefit the broader public.

Metro is engaging the services of a consultant to prepare a comprehensive analysis with recommendations for how Metro should best structure its investment in homeless programs to yield the most benefits for the transit system and our customers while also providing solutions that connect the homeless to appropriate housing and supportive services. This will further create opportunities to align homeless strategies, resulting in better leveraging and coordination of services and funds. Recovery from the pandemic offers an opportunity to reexamine our current program and partnerships to better coordinate, avoid duplication of efforts, and effectively leverage and maximize resources. Metro will return to the board in June 2022 with the results of this analysis and recommendations for moving forward.

### **DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT**

This Board action will not have a direct impact on safety.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

Adoption of the Letter of Agreement - Amendment Number 5 would result in an additional cost of \$1,470,000 for the extension of the interim shelter program through June 30, 2022. The costs for these services are included in the FY22 budget. The Board authorized funding to support Metro's ongoing and expansion of homelessness outreach efforts through the adoption of Motion 26.2 - Re-imagining Metro's Approach to Public Safety. Motion 26.2 includes \$3 million for PSAC pilot homelessness strategies that would be used to fund this extension. Funding for this effort is included in Metro's Federally approved indirect cost allocation plan and includes a mix of federal, state, and local sources including operating eligible funds.

### **EQUITY PLATFORM**

Expanding Metro's efforts to address homelessness on the transit system through extending the HAL shelter program will directly benefit unhoused individuals in LA County. Data from the 2020 LAHSA point-in-time count shows that a majority (over 64%) of individuals experiencing homelessness are male, and over 35% are African American individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness. Increasing funding and outreach efforts to address the most need will have a direct impact on Metro's efforts to invest in Equity Focus Communities.

The extension of the interim shelter pilot program will increase interim/emergency housing for unhoused Metro riders. Extending the interim shelter pilot program at the Home At Last facility, which is located in South Los Angeles, will directly improve access to interim housing for individuals who are experiencing homelessness in the communities near the shelter, as well as throughout LA

County.

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS**

The staff recommendation to expand the partnership with the Department of Health Services supports Metro's Vision 2028 Strategic Plan goal #4.1 which states: Metro will work with partners to build trust and make decisions that support the goals of the Vision 2028 Strategic Plan. An excerpt from the Vision 2028 Strategic Plan cites - Transportation interfaces with quality of life issues, such as equity, economic opportunity, gentrification, displacement, affordable housing, homelessness, environmental quality, public health, and access to education and health care.

### **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

The Board could consider not extending the HAL shelter agreement and instead end the program immediately. This would require DHS to re-house 50-60 clients who are currently housed at HAL and require a 30-day notice to clients.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Should the Board approve the staff recommendation, the CEO will execute Amendment Number 5 to the Letter of Agreement with LA County Department of Health Services to extend the pilot emergency shelter program to June 30, 2022. Metro is pursuing a consultant to provide a comprehensive analysis with recommendations for how Metro should best structure its investment in homeless programs and staff will return to the Board with those recommendations.

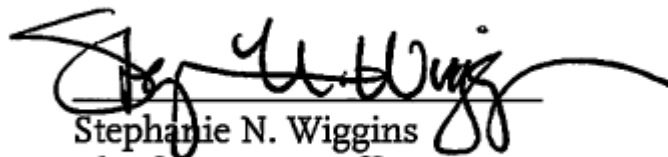
### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A - DHS Letter of Agreement Amendment No. 5

Attachment B - PSAC HAL Interim Shelter Recommendations - January 2022

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