



Board Report

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Agenda Number: 22.

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
JUNE 15, 2023

SUBJECT: AMENDMENT TO THE LETTER OF AGREEMENT WITH THE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES (DHS) FOR HOMELESS PROGRAM SERVICES

ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION

AUTHORIZE the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to execute Amendment Number 8 to the Letter of Agreement for Multidisciplinary Street-based Engagement Services with the County Department of Health Services (DHS) increasing the amount by \$63,934,200 from \$28,920,000 to a new a total amount of \$92,854,200 for the continuation of homeless program services from September 1, 2023 through June 30, 2027 (Attachment A).

ISSUE

Metro entered into a Letter of Agreement (LOA)with LA County’s Department of Health Services (DHS) to provide services that support Metro’s comprehensive homeless outreach and engagement program. The LOA includes oversight of outreach teams and the provision of dedicated short-term crisis/interim housing beds to serve people experiencing homelessness on the Metro system. The current agreement expires on August 31, 2023. Staff recommends that the Board authorize the CEO to amend the agreement through execution of Amendment No. 8 for an additional four years through June 30, 2027 in the amount of \$63,934,200 to address the continued need for homeless outreach services.

BACKGROUND

The homeless crisis in Los Angeles County is among the most severe in the country. Despite substantial investments and efforts, this crisis continues to pose significant challenges to cities throughout LA County, with serious implications for , transit agencies. According to the 2022 point-in-time count conducted by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, over 69,000 individuals are currently experiencing homelessness in the county. Metro’s point-in-time count in 2022, found that over 800 people experiencing homeless (PEH) are sheltering on our system at bus rapid transit and rail stations.

During the pandemic, as ridership declined, there was a noticeable surge in individuals experiencing

homelessness seeking refuge on the Metro system. Although transit vehicles and stations are not intended for use as shelters, they have become a temporary safe haven for people seeking shelter, given scarce shelter resources countywide and respite from the extreme weather conditions in both winter and summer. It is important to recognize that while Metro's primary function is that of a transit operator, not a homeless service provider, the magnitude of the crisis necessitates an all-hands-on-deck approach to address the chronic impacts to the transit system. Metro is dedicated to improving the customer experience of its riders, and in order to be successful in this endeavor, we must also address the needs of riders seeking shelter on our system.

Currently, regional coordination for homeless services is managed by the Los Angeles Continuum of Care partners, including social service agencies, LA County, and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA). Metro has found that most outreach occurs Monday - Friday, from 8 am - 4 pm, and Metro's transit properties are not included in the current street-based outreach service areas, leaving people experiencing homelessness on Metro without care, support or access to the homeless services.

To address the gap in services on transit created by the Los Angeles Continuum of Care partners, including social service agencies, LA County, and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), and concerns from our riders, Metro has taken proactive measures by contracting dedicated outreach teams specifically tasked with providing resources to individuals experiencing homelessness on Metro property during extended hours and weekends. This strategic move aims to align outreach efforts with Metro's operational hours, ensuring that support is available when it is most needed. Since 2017, Metro has made substantial investments and formulated a comprehensive outreach strategy designed to connect homeless individuals sheltering in the transit system to essential health services, social assistance, and supportive housing.

Metro's comprehensive homeless outreach strategy is contracted through a Letter of Agreement (LOA) with the LA County DHS, Housing for Health Program. The department manages the service agreements with social service providers. The existing LOA includes DHS oversight of program services with 16 multi-disciplinary outreach teams (MDTs) and up to 150 dedicated interim housing beds at a cost not-to-exceed \$28,920,000. Due to cost savings realized during FY23, Metro extended the existing Letter of Agreement term to continue program services through August 31, 2023.

Summary of Metro Letter of Agreement with DHS for Homeless Program Services

Metro and the Los Angeles County, Department of Health Services entered into a Letter of Agreement (LOA) for Multidisciplinary Street-Based Engagement Services, in June 2018 to provide services from July 1, 2018, through June 30, 2019, in the amount of \$4,940,000. This LOA included funding for 8 street-based homeless outreach teams on the Metro system.

Amendment Number 1

June 2019, Metro and DHS entered into Amendment Number 1 to the LOA; which continued outreach program services through June 30, 2021, and increased the funding by \$9,880,000.

Amendment Number 2

In March 2021, Metro and DHS entered into Amendment No. 2 to establish a four-month homeless shelter bed pilot program, increasing funding for the Agreement by \$1,500,000. The pilot program included additional outreach staff to enhance homeless outreach teams and eighty interim housing beds at the Home At Last shelter in South Los Angeles.

Amendment Number 3

June 2021, Metro and DHS entered into Amendment No. 3 to extend the Term of the Agreement through June 30, 2023, and increase the funding by \$9,880,000 to continue outreach services and interim housing.

Amendment Number 4

In November 2021, Metro and DHS entered into Amendment No. 4 to increase the funding by \$1,250,000 to continue the interim shelter pilot program at Home At Last.

Amendment Number 5

In February 2022, Metro and DHS entered into Amendment No. 5 to increase the funding by \$1,470,000 to continue the interim shelter pilot program at Home At Last through June 2022.

Amendment Number 6

In February 2023, Metro and DHS entered into Amendment No. 6 to expand the scope of services to include 8 new homeless outreach teams and to reallocate funding to include authorization for up to 150 interim housing beds. This amendment utilized cost-savings to fund the expansion of teams and interim housing beds.

Amendment Number 7

June 2023, Metro and the County entered into Amendment No. 7 to amend the Agreement to expand the scope of services and extend the period of performance to August 31, 2023. This amendment utilized FY23 cost-savings to fund the expansion of outreach teams and interim housing beds.

DISCUSSION

Metro's approach to homeless outreach involves a diverse set of services and activities that aim to establish connections with individuals experiencing homelessness, establish trust, and facilitate their access to vital resources such as shelter, food, healthcare, and employment services.

Metro has worked to infuse industry best-practices to ensure effective homeless outreach that results in referrals to interim and permanent housing. Some of the best-practices implemented in Metro's transit environment include:

- **Housing first** strategies are important to the effectiveness of homeless outreach and engagement - if shelter, housing, and/or family reunification is available - outreach teams work diligently to directly refer people experiencing homelessness without barriers to access.
- **Building relationships** with people experiencing homelessness takes time and outreach workers engage with individuals over a period of weeks, months or even years until they are connected to the right social services and or housing.

- **Meeting people where they are** is the most effective outreach model. Metro teams visit encampments, transit stations, and onboard transit vehicles to engage people where they are living or seeking shelter, rather than expecting them to leave the transit facility to be connected to services or shelter.
- **Cultural diversity and sensitivity are a priority** to address the diverse needs of people experiencing homelessness. Metro's outreach teams are diverse culturally and also employ individuals from a broad range of backgrounds, including people with lived experience in homelessness, drug addiction, and the criminal justice system. Metro works with DHS to bring on staff from the diverse communities the transit system serves to establish diverse and reflective outreach teams.

The LOA Amendment Number 8 includes an expansion of multi-disciplinary teams from 16 teams to up to 24 teams, the continuation of the authorization for up to 150 interim housing beds, and the extension of the program term through June 30, 2027, for a total not-to-exceed amount of \$63,934,200. The additional eight MDTs will enable greater overall coverage and focus on station hot spots and encampments on Metro property. Each service provider is assigned coverage zones so that resources can be coordinated based on staff availability and community knowledge.

Metro uses multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs) consisting of 2 to 5 members, including outreach workers, case managers, addiction specialists, housing navigators, and mental health specialists. These teams are dedicated to engaging with individuals experiencing homelessness within the transit system, which encompasses Metro facilities, stations, and vehicles. The wide range of services provided by these MDTs includes on-site triage, comprehensive assessments, direct referrals to social services, distribution of hygiene kits, access to medical services, mental health care, case management, and assistance in securing shelter, housing, and additional support services. The overarching objective of homeless outreach efforts is to provide support to individuals experiencing homelessness and empower them to attain stability and self-sufficiency.

Each of Metro's MDTs consists of staff members from the lead social service provider in their respective service planning areas (SPAs). The following organizations are involved in the MDTs:

- LA Family Housing: San Fernando Valley
- Union Station Homeless Services: San Gabriel Valley
- HOPICS: South Bay/South LA/Southeast LA/Long Beach
- LA Mission/Christ Centered Ministries (CCM): Downtown LA/South Bay
- PATH: Downtown LA/Westside

By collaborating with these established social service providers, Metro aims to leverage their expertise and local knowledge to maximize the effectiveness of the outreach efforts in each specific region within Los Angeles County.

To date, Metro's outreach efforts have been successful in connecting riders experiencing homelessness with much-needed support services and housing options. Since 2018, MDTs have

engaged over 13,237 individuals, 2,090 have been connected with interim housing, and 942 individuals have been permanently housed. Metro's street-based outreach teams consistently surpass county metrics for engagement and housing outcomes.

Metro's existing Letter of Agreement (LOA) also includes the ability to contract with a service provider for up to 150 interim housing beds. Having direct access to interim housing shelter beds provides outreach teams the ability to quickly house individuals and families that they encounter on the transit system. The DHS interim housing also provides supportive wrap-around services, like meals, case management, medical care and housing navigation. This helps to improve overall linkage to appropriate resources and streamlines the path to permanent housing compared to crisis beds or motels which do not have the access to case management services. The interim housing provided under the LOA is also more cost-effective, given that the rates are a pre-negotiated fixed cost. Outreach teams are also able to directly access the shelter beds 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Metro currently contracts 25 beds for individuals and families at LA Global Care facilities located throughout Los Angeles.

..Determination Of Safety Impact

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

Metro's transit vehicles and stations are not meant for habitation. By providing outreach and access to housing through this Board action - Metro will be able to implement care-based strategies to address the needs of people experiencing homelessness.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Approval of the Letter of Agreement - Amendment Number 8 would cost of \$15,849,900 in Fiscal Year 2024. The costs for these services are included in the FY24 budget for cost center 2614, Bus Operations Transportation Project 300601. Funding for this operating related effort is ordinary operating sources, including fare revenues and operating eligible sales tax funds. Because the contract spans multiple fiscal years the Deputy Executive Officer, Homelessness Initiatives will be responsible for budgeting funds via the annual budget process.

EQUITY PLATFORM

Expanding Metro's efforts to address homelessness on the transit system through extending the homeless outreach program will directly benefit unhoused individuals in LA County. Data from the 2022 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. Contracted MDTs will be serving EFCs throughout the Metro system.

The extension of the homeless services program will increase access to interim/emergency and permanent housing for unhoused seeking shelter on Metro . This work will directly improve access to interim housing for individuals who are experiencing homelessness in the communities near Metro bus and rail lines throughout LA County.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The staff recommendation to expand the agreement 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 agreement and instead end the program immediately. This alternative is not recommended, as Metro is not a direct recipient of state and federal homeless outreach funding so there is a direct benefit to having homeless outreach services that are managed by Metro through the County of Los Angeles homeless services.

NEXT STEPS

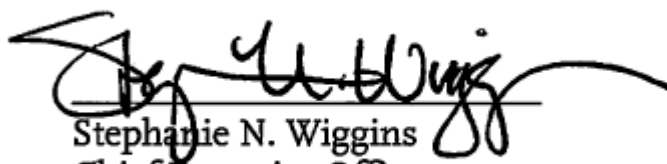
Metro is actively working towards bridging the gap between homeless individuals on the transit system and the necessary resources they require. By extending outreach services to encompass Metro properties during extended hours and weekends, Metro is striving to enhance the overall support system available to those experiencing homelessness within the transit network. Should the Board approve the staff recommendation, the CEO will execute Amendment Number 8 to the Letter of Agreement with the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services to extend the homeless outreach service agreement to June 2027.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - LOA Amendment No 8 DRAFT

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