



STAFF REPORT

December 7, 2022
File Number 0430-20

SUBJECT

SANDAG SENIOR TRANSPORTATION GRANT

DEPARTMENT

Community Services Department

RECOMMENDATION

Request the City Council adopt Resolution No. 2022-166, authorizing the Deputy City Manager/Director of Communications and Community Services or their designee to apply for \$92,463 in Senior Mini-Grant (SMG) funding through the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG); and if awarded, to accept the grant funds, complete the budget adjustment, and complete the grant documents on behalf of the City of Escondido ("City").

Staff Recommendation: Approval (Community Services Department: Joanna Axelrod, Deputy City Manager / Director of Community Services)

Presenter: Robert Rhoades, Deputy Director of Community Services

FISCAL ANALYSIS

The matching requirement of this grant is fulfilled using existing funding for the City of Escondido Senior Transportation Program through CDBG (\$56,110) and County of San Diego (\$156,326). The requested SMG funding (\$92,463) through SANDAG will offset the remaining expenses to the General Fund for two years. The request and corresponding resolution also include a provision to authorize the Director of Finance to modify the City budget to accept the grant funds and set up the necessary budget(s).

PREVIOUS ACTION

On June 22, 2022, the City Council approved Resolution No. 2022-69, adopting the fiscal year 2022-2023 Annual Operating Budget which includes \$465,700 for the Senior Nutrition and Transportation Program.

On June 22, 2022, the City Council approved Resolution No. 2022-79, authorizing a Public Services Agreement with Full Access & Coordinated Transportation, Inc., dba Facilitating Access to Coordinated Transportation ("FACT") in the amount of \$157,660 for transportation services for seniors to and from the Park Avenue Community Center to participate in the Senior Nutrition Program.

On June 15, 2022, the City Council approved Resolution No. 2022-84, adopting the fiscal year 2022-2023 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnership Program funds and



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approving submittal to the United States Department Housing and Urban Development which includes funding of \$34,610 for the Senior Transportation Program.

On September 29, 2021, the City Council approved Resolution No. 2021-146 to allocate \$22,808,509 of funding, commonly referred to as the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (“ARPA”) toward projects that support public health, promote and stimulate the economic growth and enhance the financial stability of the City, as well as programs that support the nonprofit and local business community. One of the projects included in that funding is an accessible vehicle for the Senior Nutrition and Transportation Program to address the current lack of accessibility available from the City’s transportation contractor for persons with disabilities.

On February 5, 2020, the City Council approved Resolution No. 2020-15, authorizing the Mayor and City Clerk to accept a Senior Nutrition and Transportation grant from the County of San Diego designated for Escondido seniors, and execute contract documents on behalf of the City.

BACKGROUND

The City has offered the Senior Nutrition and Transportation Program for over 40 years. Escondido seniors, who are faced with food scarcity, economic challenges, and rising costs find it difficult to make ends meet on a fixed income. The transportation and meal services offered through the Senior Nutrition and Transportation Program present a solution to Escondido seniors to access good nutrition and combat isolation in a positive environment. As a result of this service, the senior community can continue to be an active participant in the City’s economic and civic growth.

In July 2022, a Public Services Agreement was entered into with the current provider to transport seniors to and from the Park Avenue Community Center for nutritional senior meal service. The term of the Agreement is for one year, with three additional one-year option periods. The cost of the first year of the agreement is \$157,660 with the renewal periods at a rate not to exceed 5% of the preceding agreement period.

City staff have encountered a number of challenges in working with the current transportation service provider, including:

- They were the only respondent to the last two RFPs issued by the City creating a situation wherein there is no alternative vendor pending dissatisfaction with the current provider or their inability to perform the service.
- They use LYFT drivers as a third-party provider which lack accountability for poor service and/or do not follow established protocols. The following issues have also been experienced:
 - Drivers are not able to accommodate ADA considerations (wheelchairs).
 - Some drivers have asked seniors for extra tips or extra money for gas.
 - Drivers generally do not assist seniors in/out of vehicles or to/from their residences.



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- The pick-up times are variable 15-minutes before or after the scheduled time which may result in the senior waiting in the elements for up to 30 minutes.
- LYFT drivers are not able to accommodate some requests, such as sitting in the front seat.
- Not all drivers are familiar with the area and only go to the pin drop location on the maps, not paying attention to the addresses. This results in some seniors walking up to one block to get to the vehicle.
- LYFT drivers sometimes do not pick-up rides because some of the distances are not lucrative enough (i.e. too short of a drive). This results in cancellations of rides by the drivers leaving the riders with no way to get to the Park Avenue Community Center in time to participate in the lunch program.
- The service provider typically misses the established deadlines for submitting invoices (by the fifth of the preceding month). This is important as the City is required to submit supporting documentation to the County of San Diego within a specified period of time as well.
- The increased cost associated with the new agreement has resulted in a limitation on the number of daily riders we can accommodate. As such, the staff have initiated a waitlist to further manage potential cost overruns.

Following up with this service provider, managing disappointed participants, detailing and documenting issues, and resolving ongoing situations have taken up significant and limited staffing resources. As a result of these ongoing issues, City staff are recommending this program be transitioned in-house to eliminate the use of an outside vendor pending the acquisition of vehicles. To clarify, the scope of this transportation program would remain limited to just transporting seniors door-to-door in order to participate in the Senior Nutrition program. The SANDAG grant outlined below provides an opportunity to cover the remaining operational costs from the City's General Fund that are not subsidized by CDBG or the County of San Diego.

SANDAG announced a call for project funding through Senior Mini-Grants in September 2022. This allowed for the release of funding through a competitive process in three distinct areas: capital, planning, and operations. City staff reviewed the eligibility criteria and determined that the City was only qualified for the operational subdivision of the grant through the Senior Transportation Program.

As a San Diego County municipality providing traditional shuttle service to individuals 60 years of age or older, the Senior Transportation Program meets all of the requirements for funding under this grant program. Furthermore, the SANDAG grant allows the City to use existing CDBG and County of San Diego Nutrition Program funding (Contract #561764) to satisfy the 20% matching funds stipulation, releasing the City from matching fund responsibility.

The City is applying for funds in the amount of \$92,463 for the two-year grant term to cover operational costs for the Senior Transportation Program that are not fully covered by CDBG or County of San Diego funding.



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RESOLUTIONS

- a. Resolution No. 2022-166