



City Council Agenda Report

Meeting Date: January 14, 2025

Prepared By: Saskia Lagergren

Approved By: Gabriel Engeland

Subject: Crossing Guard Services – Approve Transition to City-Based Management

COUNCIL PRIORITY AREA

- Business Communities
- Circulation Safety and Efficiency
- Environmental Sustainability
- Housing
- Neighborhood Safety Infrastructure
- General Government

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the transition of the Crossing Guard Program from the current third-party contractor, All City Management Services (ACMS), to a city-based management system led by the Human Resources and Police Departments.

Authorize the City Manager to enter into an MOU with school districts to share costs for services provided.

FISCAL IMPACT

Taking the crossing guard program in-house would result in cost savings to the City of approximately \$140K annually. The City is currently paying approximately \$550K annually for ACMS' contract, whereas the cost of taking the program in-house would be approximately \$410K for the first year. If there is minimal turnover in crossing guards, then the annual cost savings would increase even more since some of the recruitment, hiring, training and on-boarding costs would be reduced. There would be further cost savings by having the affected school districts cost-share a small portion of the cost.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Not Applicable.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

Not Applicable.

BACKGROUND

Since 2009, The Los Altos Police Department has contracted with All City Management Services (ACMS) to provide crossing guard services at key intersections surrounding elementary and middle schools in the Los Altos community. The program ensures the safety of students during peak school commute times. ACMS is the sole provider for private crossing guard services in the State of California. Over the course of the last fifteen years, ACMS' costs have significantly increased. For the 2024-2025 school year, the cost to staff twenty-six (26) sites with crossing guards was approximately \$550K. As the costs continue to rise, this has become fiscally unsustainable for the City. Staff have identified potential cost savings, improved service quality and greater flexibility by managing the program internally.

ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION

Bringing the crossing guard program in-house offers the following benefits:

- **Cost Efficiency:** By eliminating administrative fees and profit margins charged by the third-party vendor, the City can reallocate resources directly to staffing and training. Initial analysis indicated potential savings of at least \$140K annually.
- **Service Quality:** The City will have direct control over hiring, training and supervision, ensuring crossing guards are well-trained and aligned with the City's safety standards. It will allow for greater accountability and the ability to address performance issues promptly.
- **Flexibility and Community Engagement:** The City can adjust staffing levels and deployment locations based on real-time needs and feedback from school and residents. Employing local residents as crossing guards will foster stronger community ties.

If approved, staff will undertake the following steps:

- **Recruitment:** Post job openings and conduct outreach to local residents for crossing guard positions.
- **Training:** Develop a robust training program focused on traffic safety, communication and emergency response.
- **Program Management:** Designate a Community Service Officer (CSO) from the Police Department as the lead for scheduling, supervision and timekeeping for payroll processing.
- **Timeline:** Transition to the in-house model will be completed prior to the start of the 2025/2026 school year.

Staff have done a cost analysis and determined that there would be cost savings to the City to hire part-time crossing guards in-house, rather than continuing to contract with ACMS. An analysis was done to determine if there were any crossing guard locations that could be eliminated due to either a traffic mitigation device, such as a stop sign having been added, or there no longer being a need at a specific location for a crossing guard. There were three such locations that were deemed no longer necessary, taking the number of necessary locations down to twenty-three (23). This was communicated to the affected school districts' leadership. City of Los Altos Crossing Guard Map attached, as well as Los Altos Crossing Guard Program Table with three (3) proposed locations removed.

The estimated cost of transitioning the crossing guard program in-house is approximately \$410K. This includes:

- Initial recruitment and training expenses
- Ongoing salary and benefits for crossing guards
- Administrative costs for program management (Human Resources Department and Police Department personnel)

Using a base hourly rate of \$25 per hour for a crossing guard, the cost for twenty-three (23) locations would be approximately \$290K annually for the salary of the crossing guards (including Medicare, Worker's Compensation insurance, etc). The cost of City staff time to recruit, hire, train and manage the program would be approximately \$120K annually. This staff time would be a combination of HR staff time (part-time) and a full-time Police Department Community Service Officer (CSO). If there was minimal turnover in crossing guards year-to-year, the cost of staff time would decrease for Human Resources, since fewer people would have to be recruited, hired, onboarded and trained. This would result in even more cost savings to the City. The cost was computed for the hiring of thirty (30) crossing guards, since there needs to be relief crossing guards who are available for sick call-ins, etc.

In comparison, the current contract with ACMS costs approximately \$550K annually. This equates to an annual savings of at least \$140K to the City by taking the program in-house. Over the next five (5) years, the in-house model is projected to result in a net savings of approximately \$700K.

The Human Resources Department would be responsible for the recruitment, hiring, onboarding, training and offboarding of part-time crossing guards. The Police Department would hire a civilian Community Service Officer (CSO), who would manage the employees and would coordinate coverage for sick call-ins on a daily basis.

Additionally, staff has reached out to leadership at all three affected school districts to discuss the possibility of cost-sharing a portion of the cost to staff the locations with crossing guards. There would be a partnership between the City and the school districts to ensure the safety of children going to and from school. The school districts have agreed to contribute a portion of the cost, which results in further cost savings to the City.

Transitioning the crossing guard program in-house aligns with the City's goals of operational efficiency, improved service quality and enhanced community engagement. Staff are confident that this change will result in long-term benefits for the city and its residents.

ATTACHMENTS

1. City of Los Altos Crossing Guard Map
2. Los Altos Crossing Guard Program Locations Table
3. Cost breakdown of in-house program
4. ACMS contract