

Mayor and Council Communication

DATE: 05/23/23

M&C FILE NUMBER: M&C 23-0417

LOG NAME: 19MEALS ON WHEELS TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

SUBJECT

(ALL) Authorize a Substantial Amendment to the City of Fort Worth's 2019-2020 Action Plan, Authorize Execution of Related Contract with Meals on Wheels, Inc. of Tarrant County and Authorize a Change in Use and Expenditure in the Community Development Block Grant Fund in the Amount of \$360,000.00 to Fund the Meals on Wheels Program to Provide Vulnerable Population with Access to Transportation

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that City Council:

1. Authorize change in use and expenditure in the amount of \$360,000.00 of Community Development Block Grant Funds to fund Meals on Wheels, Inc. of Tarrant County to provide citywide transportation services for elderly and disabled;
 2. Authorize a Substantial Amendment to the City of Fort Worth 2019-2020 Action Plan;
 3. Authorize execution of related contract with Meals on Wheels, Inc. of Tarrant County not to exceed \$360,000.00; and
 4. Authorize the City Manager or his designee to amend contracts if requested and such amendments are necessary for completion of the program, or to amend contract if necessary to achieve program goals, provided any amendment is within the scope of the program and complies with City policies and all applicable laws and regulations governing the use of federal grant funds.
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DISCUSSION:

In June 2020, the City of Fort Worth was awarded \$2,466,479.00 in Community Development Block Grant Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (CDBG-CV) funds to provide services to low and moderate-income residents to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic. The Fort Worth City Council subsequently awarded these funds to local nonprofit organizations providing a variety of urgently needed COVID-19-related services to eligible populations, including emergency food services for elderly populations. The nonprofit senior services organization Meals on Wheels was awarded \$100,000.00 for a meal delivery program for elderly citizens isolated in their homes.

The organization implemented a transportation program in October 2021, providing transportation services to and from home to adult activity centers for active seniors. The individual must be on the Meals on Wheels nutrition program and receive congregate meals, home-delivered meals or supplemental nutrition. This service is primarily to provide congregate clients transportation to and from adult activity centers for meals and activities. Due to increased demand following the end of COVID-related mandates, cost to operate the program has significantly increased. As a result, additional funding has been requested to support the program through the current fiscal year ending September 30, 2023.

Additional funding has been made available through unprogrammed funding previously allocated to organizations with unexpended balances. The City of Fort Worth proposes to reallocate the \$360,000.00 to Meals On Wheels to fund the transportation program to ensure that older individuals are able to continue participating in social activities and meals. With this additional funding, Meals On Wheels will be able to provide over 10,000 one-way trips or 5,000 round trips, at a cost of \$15.50 per trip to approximately 90 unduplicated clients.

Transportation services provided by Meals on Wheels is more economical than other existing transportation services such as Trinity Metro, Uber, Lyft, or Catholic Charities. Trinity Metro is a federally subsidized bus service that requires older adults to walk to a bus stop which may be one or more blocks from their doorstep. Due to the distance to most bus stops, seniors would be required to walk in extreme weather conditions which include heat, cold, and/or rain for one or more blocks to access a ride. This is not the best option for many passengers currently using the MOW van service with average in age of 75 years of age.

Trinity Metro Access is a mobility impaired transportation service and provides transportation within the City of Fort Worth and only provides their services to persons with a verified disability that prevents them from riding regular city bus service. The average cost for access passes is \$4.00 per passenger trip and may require longer ride times than the Meals on Wheels van service. The rate per trip is lower than Meals on Wheels contracted services but is subsidized by Federal Transportation Authority (FTA) funding. Meals on Wheels currently completes the intake documentation required for the Area Agency on Aging funded trips to verify passenger eligibility. Approximately 19% of Meals on Wheels transit riders ride Access using passes purchased by Meals on Wheels which is funded by the Area Agency on Aging. The Access service is the least preferred service by the older adults using transit behind taxi service. Most seniors prefer to ride to the center with their friends on a senior van.

Meals on Wheels van service is similar in cost to Uber/Lyft and taxi, but not similar in customer service. The difference is the Meals on Wheels service is a door to door assisted service for older adults needing assistance from their doorstep to the van. The transit contractors use the same drivers daily and are familiar with the senior passengers they transport and would recognize if there are physical or cognitive changes that may require immediate attention. In addition, in some instances the Meals on Wheels contracted van driver remains onsite or on call to return a senior passenger home in the event they become ill while at the center.

Catholic Charities trip rate on average is \$27.00 - \$35.00 per trip throughout Fort Worth per the Catholic Charities Transit Director, and they provide door to door assisted services similar to what is provided by Meals on Wheels contracted providers. The difference between Catholic

Charities and Meals on Wheels transit is the completion of documentation to meet federal funding guidelines. Catholic Charities' average rate in Fort Worth is \$31.00 per trip and does not include the additional cost that would be added for completion of passenger intakes required under Area Agency on Aging or City of Fort Worth Community Development Block Grant funding.

The CDBG grant and Action Plan funding year shown in the funding tables may vary and be substituted based on the principle of First In, First Out (FIFO) and consistent with all HUD regulations and guidance, in order to expend oldest grant funds first.

Funds From:

Action Plan Year(s)	Program	Amount(s) not to Exceed
2019-20	Unprogrammed Funds (CDBG-CV)	\$360,000.00

Funds To:

Action Plan Year(s)	Available Funding Source(s)	Amount(s) not to Exceed
2019-2020	Meals On Wheels, Transportation Program	\$360,000.00

A 5-day public notice was published in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* on Sunday, April 2, 2023. The public comment period will begin on Monday, April 3, 2023 and end on Friday, April 7, 2023.

FISCAL INFORMATION / CERTIFICATION:

The Director of Finance certifies that funds are available in the current operating budget, as previously appropriated, in the Grants Operating Federal Fund for the CDBG-CV PY19/FY20 project to support the approval of the above recommendations, authorization for the change of use and execution of a contract. Prior to any expenditure being incurred, the Neighborhood Services Department has the responsibility to validate the availability of funds.

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