



DATE: December 10, 2019

CATEGORY: Items Initiated by Council

DEPT.: City Council

TITLE: **Youth Mental Health**

PURPOSE

The purpose of this agenda item is to solicit Council's interest in addressing youth mental health and exploring any or all of the options listed in this Council report.

BACKGROUND

Recent incidents at our local high school have brought to light the issue of youth mental health, and members of the public, education community, and the City's Youth Advisory Committee have asked for the City's involvement in addressing some of the issues raised, including:

- Better safety measures at the Caltrain stations/at-grade crossings—Research the City of Palo Alto's actions to improve safety that started with human track watch monitors, which was replaced in 2018 by cameras at each of the grade crossings.
- Convening community stakeholders to discuss and identify existing programs and services that address youth mental health as well as the gaps and improvements that can be made.
- Exploring the City's role in the provision of youth mental health services and programs, including how City funds are utilized, as well as work that has been conducted and that could be conducted in the future around City Council Policy K-19 on Suicide Prevention, passed in 2012.
- Working with the Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) to outreach to youth to gain their perspective and input on their suggestions on addressing youth mental health. At the November 5, 2019 Council Youth Services Committee meeting, YAC representatives shared their interest in working on this issue.

DISCUSSION

To assist with the Council discussion of this agenda item, staff is providing additional information about the City of Palo Alto's Caltrain Corridor Video Management System.

City of Palo Alto's Caltrain Corridor Video Management System

Beginning in 2009, the City of Palo Alto formed Project Safety Net (PSN), a community collaborative made up of the City of Palo Alto, the Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD), parents, students, community leaders, health-care professionals, faith communities, and youth-serving nonprofit agencies focused on youth well-being and implementing strategies to prevent suicide attempts by reducing access to the Caltrain right-of-way.

The human track watch monitor program began in mid-2009 with a dedicated group of community volunteers who stood watch at key rail crossings. The mission of the track watch monitors was to "observe and report" any unsafe conditions they observed; however, the human monitors were not authorized to physically intervene with a person on the tracks and were instructed to notify 9-1-1 – Communications so that law enforcement could respond and take any needed actions and so Caltrain could slow or stop trains.

Due to safety concerns and the inability to sustain volunteers, from November 2009 to October 2014, the Palo Alto Police Department retained a private security firm to be on-site monitors seven days a week at two rail crossings for approximately seven-hour shifts in the evening that resulted in a cost for rail security services of approximately \$5,000 per month. To address additional incidents between October 2014 and April 2016, the City of Palo Alto increased its rail security services to five rail-crossing locations with rail security monitors, increasing their presence to 24-hours per day to mitigate the risk of incidents involving both Caltrain and freight trains. The City of Palo Alto budgeted \$1.7 million annually to fund the services described above.

Beginning in 2018, the City of Palo Alto gradually began to draw down and reduce the budget for the rail security monitors and installed an integrated video system at four at-grade crossings that are more effective at detecting unsafe conditions on the tracks compared to "human monitors." It was felt cameras on the tracks are a best practice acknowledged by rail safety experts and cost substantially less over time than maintaining human guards at the tracks. The cameras and sensors installed are a combination of fixed, thermal, and PTZ (pan, tilt, zoom) with the capability of viewing objects up to 1,000' down the rail corridor in variable light and weather conditions, and include some artificial intelligence to automatically detect certain behaviors and create

alerts to law enforcement. In addition, off-site operators have the ability to make live voice announcements or provide direction to people spotted on the tracks or in the immediate area. The cost to design and construct the Caltrain Corridor Video Management System was \$1,413,734 and came with a five-year system maintenance agreement at a cost of \$225,000 annually.

RECOMMENDATION

Depending on Council interest, staff could be directed to bring back to Council any additional research and background material available, as well as recommendations. Should Council wish to do this, the item will need to be brought back with consideration of staff workload on the Council's other priority projects. The best time to do that would be with the mid-cycle review of Council Goals and workloads in February 2020, or as part of the Fiscal Year 2020-21 budget process.

FISCAL IMPACT

There are no fiscal impacts associated with this agenda item at this time.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Do not accept the recommendation to direct staff to return to Council with recommendations for projects or programs that address youth mental health and issues.
2. Provide other direction.

PUBLIC NOTICING – Agenda posting.

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