



**DATE:** May 15, 2018

**CATEGORY:** New Business

**DEPT.:** City Manager's Office and  
Public Works Department

**TITLE:** **Recreational Vehicle Waste Disposal  
Pilot Results and Consideration of  
Ongoing Waste Disposal Services**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. Receive a report on the results of the recreational vehicle sanitary waste disposal pilot and options for the consideration of ongoing waste disposal services.
2. Approve staff's recommendation to discontinue provision of recreational vehicle sanitary waste disposal services.

### **BACKGROUND**

Among the challenges associated with the use of vehicles for shelter is the safe, legal, and sanitary disposal of sewage. Many recreational vehicles (RVs) have restroom facilities and storage tanks that must be emptied. There are few local options for disposal of RV waste, with the closest options being Redwood City and Morgan Hill. Occasionally, waste tanks have been discovered leaking and illegal dumping from waste tanks has occurred.

At Council's direction, staff conducted an initial analysis (October 4, 2016) and follow-up analysis (March 7, 2017) of siting, construction, and operational issues associated with developing a public RV sanitary waste disposal facility that would provide an environmentally responsible local option for RV residents to dispose of their gray and black wastewater. A memo summarizing waste disposal options as part of the March 7, 2017 Council report is included as Attachment 1.

At this meeting, staff discussed the high cost and challenges associated with a permanent waste disposal facility and the uncertainty about the demand for such a service. At that time, the capital cost was estimated at approximately \$250,000 or more, with an annual maintenance cost of \$60,000. This does not include any staff time required for supervision of the facility.

## **Pilot Design**

As an alternative, staff recommended that a three-month trial be conducted (six weeks at two different sites) using a mobile waste disposal vendor. The pilot was to include public notification of neighboring property owners and residents at each site, outreach to RV residents regarding the hours of operation of the service, monitoring of any issues or complaints, and reporting back to Council with information regarding usage, costs, complaints, and a recommendation regarding any permanent facility.

Securing a vendor to provide the service proved challenging. In response to a Request for Proposals (RFP) issued to three prospective vendors, no proposals were received in the first round, and one proposal was received in the second round.

The 12-week pilot program was conducted from January through April 2018, with services at Shoreline Amphitheatre A/B parking lot (January 16 through February 24) and the Municipal Operations Center (MOC) on Whisman Road (March 6 through April 14).

The selected vendor was stationed at the designated site (Lot A/B or the MOC) on Tuesdays from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. and on Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. during the pilot period. Service was provided in exchange for vouchers, which were distributed free of charge by the City. A Community Services Agency (CSA) outreach worker was on-site on all Tuesday service days and on some Saturday service days to engage with individuals to link them to support services.

## **Outreach Process**

To advertise the program, staff and CSA outreach workers contacted RV residents directly or by leaving information and a voucher packet on RV doors or windshields if the attempt to contact the individual was unsuccessful. The City also provided a courtesy notice to residents within a 500' radius of each service location. Information on the program was available on the City's website, and the City received media interest and coverage of the program. Staff also reached out to nonprofit organizations such as the Day Worker Center with details about the pilot program service.

## **Voucher Process**

The intent of the voucher program was to target the service to RV residents based in Mountain View and limit any barriers to usage by simplifying access to vouchers. Staff

developed a centralized tracking system using triplicate voucher books to ensure that vouchers could not be transferred. Outreach staff attempted to directly contact an individual living in the RV to explain the pilot program and hand out the packet. If contact was unsuccessful, the packet was left on the door or windshield of the RV.

The triplicate page left with the RV served as the voucher ticket for each RV to receive service. The service providers were instructed to match each voucher with the license plate of the vehicle to ensure that the RV had been parked on Mountain View streets. When a voucher for service was redeemed, the service providers issued the RV driver a new voucher for return service. If an RV came for service and did not have a voucher, the waste disposal vendor staff used a log of all distributed vouchers to see if the RV's license plate had received a voucher. If the RV's license plate was in the log, the individual could receive services without a voucher.

City staff logged the original voucher numbers and license plates and, at the close of service, logged the additional vouchers given for return service in order to quantify the number of one-time and return services. In the first round of outreach, which started on January 3, 2018 and lasted for two days, 124 vouchers were distributed to RVs on Mountain View streets. In the second round of outreach, which began on March 2, 2018 and also lasted two days, 120 vouchers were distributed to RVs on Mountain View streets and one additional voucher was given to a CSA client, for a total of 121 vouchers distributed. CSA and Police outreach staff encouraged use of the service and assisted with any questions about the pilot program.

## **ANALYSIS**

The total direct cost of materials and services for the pilot program was approximately \$29,000. This cost does not include the significant number of staff hours for program development, outreach, administration, and oversight spent by staff in the City Manager's Office, Public Works Department, Police Department, and CSA. A summary of the results of the pilot follow.

### **Shoreline Service Period**

There were a total of 18 individual RVs that received services during the 6-week Shoreline service period, with a total of 33 service provisions. The average number of services received by an individual RV was 1.8, with a range of one to four services each. RVs that returned for service typically waited one week or longer between service periods.

## MOC Service Period

There were a total of 17 individual RVs that received services during the 6-week MOC service period, with a total of 41 service provisions. The average number of services received by an individual RV was 2.5, with a range of one to eight services each. One RV returned with high frequency, but most RVs that returned for service typically waited one week or longer between service periods.

**Table 1** summarizes the data for each site and the totals for the pilot program. In total, there were 31 individual RVs serviced over the 12 weeks and 74 services were provided. On average, less than one vehicle (.77) were served each hour of available service.

<b>Table 1: Use Data and Service Metric Summary</b>			
Data	Shoreline	Data	MOC
12	Number of 4-hour waste disposal sessions available	12	Number of 4-hour waste disposal sessions available
124	Number of vouchers distributed	121	Number of vouchers distributed
18	Individual RVs that received services	17	Individual RVs that received services
33	Total number of services	41	Total number of services
1.8	Average number of services received by an individual RV	2.5	Average number of services received by an individual RV
31	Total individual RVs serviced in pilot program		
74	Total number of services in pilot program		
\$391	Cost per service (exclusive of staff costs)		
\$935	Cost per individual RV serviced (exclusive of staff costs)		

No negative feedback was received from the surrounding neighborhood areas where the pilots were noticed. CSA Outreach staff received some feedback that the clients who used the service found it helpful, especially those few who used it multiple times. There was no specific feedback that one site was preferable to the other, although the total number of services provided was greater at the MOC.

## Waste-Related Incidents

The City's Fire/Environmental Services Division collects data on the number of illegal waste dumping incidents related to inhabited cars/RVs, the number of responses to these spills, the number of citations given, the number of leaks noted, and the estimated staff hours spent on these incidents. From July to December 2017, there was an average of 11 incidents per quarter, compared to one in the first quarter of 2018, when the pilot was conducted.

The Public Services Division collects data on the number of times wastewater staff responds to RV waste dumping incidents and also the number of times special street cleanings are conducted due to such incidents. From July to December 2017, there was an average of 9.5 incidents per quarter, compared to 10 incidents in the first quarter of 2018, when the pilot was conducted. Department response data is also now supplemented by a new contracted bio-hazard clean-up service that was called to clean bio-waste 10 times since December 2017.

It is difficult to assess the direct impact of the pilot on waste-related incidents. Some metrics were lower and others were comparable. In addition, there are other factors to consider, most notably the significant level of outreach and enforcement about spill and leak regulations and prevention that have aimed to achieve reductions over time. It is also important to note that since data collection began in 2015, staff has seen fluctuations in incidents and an evolution in data collection efforts, which make trend analysis challenging.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The City Council appropriated \$30,000 for the waste disposal pilot program, and approximately \$29,000 was expended. This cost does not include staff time.

### **CONCLUSION**

Despite considerable outreach, the utilization of the pilot was relatively low, with, on average, 3.1 visits to the pilot sites per four-hour session (or .77 per hour) and a cost of \$935 per individual RV serviced. As staff discussed at the March 6, 2018 Council meeting, outreach to the population living in vehicles is challenging and requires multiple rounds of contact to build trust and engage people in services. Some individuals prefer not to connect and it is not always possible to get complete information from those who do. Consequently, we have limited information to explain the low level of utilization. Anecdotally, we are aware that some people living in RVs do not make use of the vehicle's sanitary systems, instead using public restrooms in

City facilities, stores, or gyms in the areas surrounding their parking site. A limited number of RV residents have noted that they pay for waste disposal services at the Redwood City or Morgan Hill private sanitary waste disposal facilities. Staff is also aware that one or more landlords who rent RVs pay for mobile sanitary waste disposal services for their renters.

Considering the limited pilot usage, challenges with siting, the high costs associated with providing waste disposal service through a mobile vendor or as a City operation, the high cost to construct a dump station on City land, and the many other initiatives underway addressing homelessness and the unstably housed, staff does not recommend proceeding with the provision of waste disposal services.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

1. When establishing safe parking pilot sites, direct staff to explore the provision of waste disposal services through partnerships with potential operators and funders of such sites.
2. Continue contracting for the service. If Council wishes to continue providing the service, staff recommends contracting through a mobile vendor using a model similar to the pilot program. Contracting for the service allows flexibility in terms of location and does not require capital investment in a permanent facility or staff resources for ongoing maintenance. However, considerable staff time would still be needed to oversee the program and it may be challenging to secure a vendor on an ongoing basis given the lack of interest in the City's RFP for the pilot. Based on the cost of the pilot and assuming no cost recovery and usage similar to the pilot program, the estimated annual cost of a permanent program is approximately \$120,000.
3. Investigate construction of a municipal RV waste disposal facility. Should Council direct staff to advance the construction option, staff would further develop siting and operational requirements for Council consideration. While the Shoreline and MOC sites served the pilot program, both sites present challenges for a permanent facility. Operation of the Shoreline site was avoided during the Amphitheatre concert season during the pilot program; issues associated with operating a permanent Shoreline site in coordination with the Amphitheatre would need to be identified and resolved. The space used at the MOC for the pilot program is potentially the site for on-call employee dormitory space, so planning would be required to avoid conflicting space needs. The operational model would also have

to be established, including staffing. Permanent staffing would be costly, but leaving a dump site unattended could lead to illegal dumping. Additional analysis is required to develop a recommended model.

4. Provide other direction.

**PUBLIC NOTICING** – Agenda posting and a copy of the report was sent to the Community Services Agency (CSA) and the Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD).

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Attachment: 1. RV Waste Disposal Options Memo – February 27, 2017