

LEGISLATIVE DIGEST

[Administrative Code - Programs for the Vehicular Homeless]

Ordinance amending the Administrative Code to require the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (“HSH”) to establish a Safe Overnight Parking Pilot Program to provide eligible vehicularly homeless persons a place to park and sleep in their vehicles overnight, case management, and other services; require HSH to collaborate with the Municipal Transportation Agency (“MTA”) to develop an On-Street Parking Citation and Tow- and-Storage-Fee Abatement Program to provide eligible vehicularly homeless persons with waivers of parking fines and fees; and affirming the Planning Department’s determination under the California Environmental Quality Act.

Existing Law

Currently, the City and County of San Francisco does not provide members of the public who live in their vehicles with off-street parking where they can park and sleep in their vehicles overnight without violating parking laws.

In San Francisco, it is unlawful to park or leave standing any vehicle on any public street or highway for more than 72 consecutive hours (Transportation Code Section 7.2.29.), or to park certain large Vehicles, including RVs and Mobile Homes, overnight between the hours of 12 a.m. and 6 a.m. on streets where MTA signs are posted giving notice of the parking restriction. (Transportation Code Section 7.2.54.)

With respect to parking citations, the Municipal Transportation Agency currently offers programs whereby members of the public who have outstanding parking citations may perform community service in-lieu of payment, or enter into a payment plan. In addition, the Municipal Transportation Agency offers waivers of certain towing and storage fees to eligible low-income individuals.

Amendments to Current Law

This ordinance would establish an Overnight Safe Parking Pilot Program that would provide an off-street location where program participants may park and sleep in their vehicles overnight. At this location, additional City services and referrals would also be provided to assist these individuals with transitioning to traditional, non-vehicular housing.

In addition, this ordinance would require the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing to collaborate with the Municipal Transportation Agency to develop an On-Street Parking Citation and Tow- and Storage-Fee Abatement Program to provide identified individuals with waivers of parking citation fines and vehicle towing and storage fees, and to

provide car owners and occupants with clear notice of the risk of being towed, and referral to social services, where appropriate.

Implementation of this program is subject to the Municipal Transportation Agency's exclusive authority under the Charter and other applicable laws.

The ordinance would require the Controller to track and evaluate the Overnight Safe Parking Program's outcomes, including but not limited to the number of Program Participants served by the Vehicle Navigation Triage Center and Safe Parking Lot(s); Program Participants' lengths of stay; and Program Participants' destinations upon exit (e.g., permanent housing, transitional housing). The Controller would also be required to summarize these outcomes in a report to be submitted to the Board of Supervisors no later than six months of the effective date of the ordinance, and every six months thereafter, until such time as the Program is no longer in operation. Within one year of the effective date the Controller, in consultation with the Director of the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing, would be required to submit to the Board of Supervisors a report that describes any lessons learned from the operation of the Overnight Safe Parking Program, and that makes recommendations as to how and whether the Program should be continued.

Background Information

This legislative digest reflects amendments introduced in the Land Use and Transportation Committee on April 15, 2019.

San Francisco is facing a crisis of homelessness. In addition to staying in shelters and living on the streets, some people experiencing homelessness live in a variety of vehicles, including recreational vehicles ("RVs"), vans, and passenger cars throughout the city.

Often referred to as the "vehicular homeless," people who live in their vehicles are a telling reminder of urban displacement, lack of affordable housing, and soaring housing costs that currently plague major U.S. cities, including San Francisco. The vehicular homeless often park under highways, near parks, in warehouse and commercial districts, and, increasingly, on residential streets. Because this population relies on publicly shared spaces for their habitation, they can come in conflict with residents and businesses that rely on street, public parking or easements. For these reasons, the plight of the vehicular homeless requires creative and meaningful solutions from governmental and social service agencies.

Data collected by the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing ("HSH") during the 2017 Homeless Point-in-Time Count concluded that 6% of the persons who were counted as homeless were living in a vehicle. An updated count in October 2018 found that there were 432 inhabited vehicles on the streets of San Francisco, including 313 RVs and 119 passenger cars. According to housing rights advocates, these estimates are conservative, and the actual number of people who are living temporarily or permanently in their vehicles may be much higher. The population of vehicularly homeless persons is diverse and

vulnerable, and includes: families with children, young people, immigrants, the physically and mentally disabled, seniors, veterans, the employed, and the unemployed.

National data from 2016 demonstrate that families constitute 35% of all people experiencing homelessness. Many families currently experiencing homelessness in San Francisco were formerly housed in San Francisco. For the 2017 Homeless Point-in-Time Count, 69% of respondents reported they were living in San Francisco at the time they most recently became homeless; and of those, over half (55%) had lived in San Francisco for 10 or more years. Only 8% had lived in San Francisco for less than one year.

Along the West Coast, several cities and counties have implemented programs for the vehicularly homeless. These programs typically provide a place where the vehicular homeless may park, and provide access to a wide variety of services and aid, but are intended as a temporary solution in assisting individuals to secure permanent housing.

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