

MOTION HOMELESSNESS AND POVERTY

Last week, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health declared a Hepatitis A outbreak in Los Angeles County. The State of California and Los Angeles County define an "outbreak" as having at least two locally acquired cases of a disease. Experts indicate that Los Angeles County is very early into the outbreak; vaccinating homeless individuals and their service providers is critical to preventing the outbreak from spreading. In addition to vaccinations, the availability of public restroom facilities is a vital component of preventing the further spread of Hepatitis A.

Twenty-five thousand unsheltered people in Los Angeles lack access to restrooms facilities, particularly in the evening. This lack of access has created a risky situation for both the homeless population and the general public. Without access to the basic right of a restroom, people living on the streets are at a significantly increased risk of contracting diseases like Hepatitis A that are spread through human feces. People without access to restrooms are forced to urinate and defecate in public places, and residents and business owners in certain neighborhoods, including Venice, frequently report human feces in local alleys or on local sidewalks and parkways. According to a recent report, there are only nine public restrooms available at night for the individuals living on the streets of Skid Row. Venice Beach faces an even more dire shortage with funding for only one set of beach restrooms. A June report by a group of homeless service providers, advocates and residents found that the conditions do not even meet the standards the United Nations sets for refugee camps.

Opening additional public restrooms faces two challenges: funding and proper locations. Best practices indicate public restrooms should be staffed by attendants to keep the facilities clean and free of criminal activity. And even if adequate funding were available, there remains a lack of adequate space in our dense neighborhoods to place restrooms without encroaching into the public right-of-way.

The current situation is neither tolerable nor humane, and it is a risk to public health. Los Angeles must do better. At minimum, the City should provide portable restrooms with attendants on an emergency basis. More optimally, Los Angeles should look to the City of San Francisco, which has launched a successful mobile toilet program called "Pit Stop." Operated by its Department of Public Works and a nonprofit partner, the Pit Stop program provides public toilets and sinks in San Francisco's most impacted neighborhoods—providing a place for people to take care of their bathroom needs with dignity, improving neighborhood livability, and reducing demands on Public Works staff to clean up human waste from the City's sidewalks, doorways, and streets.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Los Angeles Homelessness Services Authority (LAHSA), the City Homeless Coordinator, the City Health Commission, the Chief Legislative Analyst, and other agencies as appropriate, report to the Homelessness and Poverty Committee on the scope of this public health problem, the need for additional public restrooms, and solutions for solving it--including a report on the potential for creating a system of portable public restrooms modeled after the "Pit Stop" program in the City of San Francisco.

I FURTHER MOVE that the City Administrative Officer (CAO) and the City Homelessness Coordinator report to the City Council within 14 days on available funding sources for emergency portable public toilets and the associated bathroom attendants.

I FURTHER MOVE that the Bureau of Street Services (BSS), Bureau of Sanitation (LASAN), Department of Transportation (LADOT), and City Attorney report to the City Council relative to the current LAMC provisions governing the use of the public right-of-way and City-owned parking lots, including actions necessary to enable the City to permit the placement of portable public restrooms in designated locations, in instances when a determination is made that no other location is suitable or practicable.

PRESENTED BY:

 for Mike Bonin
MIKE BONIN

Councilmember, 11th District

SECONDED BY:



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