



City Manager's Office

March 24, 2025

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
From: Paul Buddenhagen, City Manager  
Subject: Operational Changes to Berkeley Rides for Seniors & the Disabled (BRSD)

To maximize the number of people served and adapt to changing dynamics, we will be adjusting voucher distribution frequency and amounts for seniors and people with disabilities who use Berkeley's Rides for Seniors & Disabled service, which is run through the Department of Health, Housing, & Community Services.

The program is funded through Alameda County Measure BB and provides free taxi, wheelchair van vouchers, and GoGo (Uber/Lyft) rides for low-income Berkeley seniors and disabled residents to provide access to health care and social services.

Medi-Cal, which provides a variety of medical services for adults with limited incomes, offers transportation to and from appointments for services covered by Medi-Cal. In addition, Medi-Cal beneficiaries enrolled in Alameda Alliance, the public, not-for-profit managed health care plan for people of lower income in Alameda County, or Kaiser Permanente can already take advantage of those programs' broad-ranging transportation benefits.

Berkeley Rides for Seniors & Disabled (BRSD) is an additional option for low-income seniors or people with disabilities who are unable to get transportation from those health care programs, friends, family or neighbors, or from AC Transit, BART or shared mobility tools such as electric bikes and sit-scooters – all transit systems that have low-income options.

Seniors people with disabilities enrolled in the BRSD program currently receive distributions of voucher books three times over the course of a fiscal year, which starts July 1. Participants are sent different types of vouchers based on eligibility (for example, High Medical Need participants must meet eligibility criteria certified by their primary medical provider). Participants use portions of those vouchers, coupons, or taxi scrip to pay for individual rides.

Previously, the BRSD program increased distribution amounts temporarily due to low usage and to comply with funding guidelines. We are now adjusting the program to take advantage of complementary private and public-sector services while also adapting to a recent surge in applications (averaging 50 new applications per month) and rising ride costs.

The total projected revenue for FY26 is \$865,049. However, at the current distribution rate and frequency, the total annual distribution cost would be \$2 million.

To ensure long-term sustainability and maximize service reach, distribution amounts and frequency will be reduced, beginning with the April 2025 distribution. Detailed changes are summarized in the tables below. This adjustment will allow the BRSD program to continue serving vulnerable residents within budgetary constraints.

**Chart 1: Current Distribution for Each Eligible Senior**

<b>Programs</b>	<b>Frequency of annual voucher distribution</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Annual Total</b>
Taxi Scrip Program	3 times	\$200	\$600
High Medical Need Taxi	3 times	\$480	\$1,440
Wheelchair Van Program	3 times	\$448	\$1,344
High Medical Wheelchair Van	3 times	\$448	\$1,344
GoGo (Uber and/or Lyft)	3 times	\$160	\$480

The BRSD program is currently at capacity and will not be able to sustain itself past this fiscal year without changes. To maintain the program, applications will be either waitlisted and/or not accepted until space is available. Planned reductions in voucher amounts are also necessary. New amounts are as follows:

**Chart 2: New Distribution for Each Eligible Senior**

<b>Programs</b>	<b>Frequency of annual voucher distribution</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Annual Total</b>
Taxi Scrip Program	2 times	\$120	\$240
High Medical Need Taxi	2 times	\$240	\$480
Wheelchair Van Program	2 times	\$448	\$896
High Medical Wheelchair Van	2 times	\$448	\$896
GoGo (Uber and/or Lyft)	2 times	\$100	\$200

Demand for the High Medical Need Taxi program has been significantly reduced as Medi-Cal beneficiaries enrolled in Alameda Alliance or Kaiser Permanente can already receive comprehensive transportation services for medical, dental, mental health, and substance use disorder appointments, as well as trips to pharmacies and medical supply providers. Alameda Alliance members can use [this flyer about transportation services](#) to learn how to request transportation. Kaiser members should visit [kp.org](http://kp.org).

Individuals who have Medi-Cal receive transportation to medical, dental, mental health, or substance use disorder appointments, and to pick up prescriptions and medical supplies. Medi-Cal beneficiaries can learn more on the state [Department of Health Care Services transportation services page](#).

The reduction in distribution will allow for a reassessment of program quality and utilization, providing valuable data to inform future program development. This approach will support long-term financial sustainability and enhance budget planning.

Currently, there are 1,650 Berkeley Seniors participating in the program. Each participant will receive written communication regarding these program changes beginning in April 2025. A letter with the updated changes will accompany each distribution being sent out in the next allotment. Staff will collect and assess participant feedback while monitoring utilization rates to identify service gaps and inform future program budgeting and planning.

### **Transit, shared mobility discounts available to Berkeley Seniors**

Seniors can qualify for and take advantage of discounts for trains, buses, electric scooter, and e-bikes.

- Bay Area Clipper offers a Senior card. Seniors over the age of 65 receive 50% off AC Transit fares and 62.5% off BART fares. [Apply online, in person, or by mail](#).
- Lime provides standing and seated electric scooters in Berkeley. Lime provides a micromobility program which provides [discounted rides to qualified individuals](#) who receive Medicaid, Social Security Supplemental Income, and a reduced transit program, such as a Clipper Senior card.
- Bay Wheels (Bay Area's docked bike share program) offers [reduced-rate memberships](#) at \$5 for the first year. Ride e-bikes at \$.05 per minute with a max payment of \$1 under the Bay Wheels for All membership. Bay Area residents who qualify for CalFresh, SFMTA Lifeline Pass, or PG&E CARE can sign up.

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