



City of Tacoma

City Council Action Memorandum

TO: Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager
FROM: Teresa Green, Senior Business Services Manager, Fire Finance Division
Toryono Green, Fire Chief *TL*
COPY: City Council and City Clerk
SUBJECT: Request for Ordinance to amend Chapter 3.11 of the Tacoma Municipal Code related to
Emergency Medical Transportation – November 28, 2023
DATE: November 8, 2023

SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:

The Tacoma Fire Department (TFD) is seeking approval of an ordinance amending Chapter 3.11 of the Municipal Code, relating to Emergency Medical Transportation, to restore the Emergency Medical Services levy and allow the levy to pay for medical transport charges incurred by qualified city residents, as passed by voters in Proposition 1 in the August 1, 2023 primary election.

BACKGROUND:

TFD's recommendation is based on the passage of Proposition 1 from the August 1, 2023 special election ballot.

The City Council unanimously approved placing Proposition 1 on the August 1, 2023 primary election ballot, asking voters to restore the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Levy to \$0.50/\$1,000 of assessed property value (AV) and allow the levy to pay for charges incurred by qualified city residents for all TFD transports (not paid by third parties or insurers), including Basic Life Support (BLS). Prior to Proposition 1, the EMS Levy was at \$0.28/\$1,000 of AV and only Advanced Life Support (ALS) charges could be covered. Tacoma voters approved the Proposition with a 67.44% approval.

2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Equity and Accessibility:

The most significant impact on equity will be adjusting the language of Chapter 3.11 of the Municipal Code to allow BLS out-of-pocket costs to be written down, eliminating any unpaid balance on a transport invoice after any insurance recovery. The current language adversely targets some of our most vulnerable population, especially those with limited incomes, and would have a significant financial hardship after receiving a medical transport invoice or would be sent to a collections agency if their invoice remains unpaid.

Livability: Equity Index Score: Very High Opportunity

Improve health outcomes and reduce disparities, in alignment with the community health needs assessment and CHIP (Community Health Improvement Plan), for all Tacoma residents.

Explain how your legislation will affect the selected indicator(s).

The potential financial burden is a barrier for requesting medical response or accepting medical transport, due to the out-of-pocket cost. Currently, residents need to pay the remainder of the bill for BLS transport not covered by insurance or they will be sent to a collections agency, only further exacerbating their financial position. The proposed changes to Chapter 3.11 of the Municipal Code will remove all out-of-pocket costs that exceed insurance, excluding applicable copays and deductibles, alleviating the financial consideration of utilizing 911 for genuine emergent medical needs.



ALTERNATIVES:

No alternatives; this change to the Municipal Code is required based on the passage of Proposition 1 in the August 1, 2023 primary election.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Fiscal impact is related to the increase in write down of BLS invoices. The current collections rate of balances after insurance recovery is very low, so the budgeted revenue adjustment is minor.

Fund Number & Name	COST OBJECT (CC/WBS/ORDER)	Cost Element	Total Amount
1. Fund 1155 - TFD EMS Special Revenue	609201	4342261	\$100,000
TOTAL			\$100,000

Are the expenditures and revenues planned and budgeted in this biennium’s current budget?

YES

Adjustments to EMS revenues are included in the 2023-2024 Budget Modification ordinance.

Are there financial costs or other impacts of not implementing the legislation?

YES

Will the legislation have an ongoing/recurring fiscal impact?

YES

Will the legislation change the City’s FTE/personnel counts?

NO

ATTACHMENTS:

N/A