

Date of Hearing: April 2, 2019

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON AGING AND LONG-TERM CARE

Adrin Nazarian, Chair

AB 970 (Salas) – As Amended March 20, 2019

SUBJECT: California Department of Aging: grants: transportation.

SUMMARY: An act relating to aging. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires the Department of Aging to administer a grant program and receive applications from area agencies on aging to fund transportation to and from nonemergency medical services for older individuals with disabilities and persons with a disability who reside in rural, desert, or mountain areas within a planning and service area, for the purpose of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- 2) Requires that transportation be made available using the purchase, lease, or maintenance of zero-emission or near-zero-emission vehicles with a capacity for 7, 12, or 15 passengers.
- 3) Authorizes the allocation of moneys from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund and the Air Quality Improvement Fund, upon appropriation by the Legislature, to fund the grant program.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) The California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, designates the State Air Resources Board as the state agency charged with monitoring and regulating sources of emissions of greenhouse gases. The act authorizes the state board to include the use of market-based compliance mechanisms.
- 2) Requires all moneys, except for fines and penalties, collected by the state board as part of a market-based compliance mechanism to be deposited in the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund and to be available for appropriation.
- 3) Establishes the Air Quality Improvement Program, which is administered by the state board for the purpose of funding projects related to, among other things, the reduction of criteria air pollutants and improvement of air quality.
- 4) Requires that moneys in the Air Quality Improvement Fund, upon appropriation by the Legislature, be expended by the state board in accordance with the program.
- 5) Requires the California Department of Aging to designate various private nonprofit or public agencies as area agencies on aging to work for the interests of older Californians within a planning and service area and provide a broad array of social and nutritional services.
- 6) States that the mission of the Department of Aging is to provide leadership to the area agencies on aging in developing systems of home-and community-based services that maintain individuals in their own homes or the least restrictive homelike environments.

FISCAL EFFECT: This bill has not yet been analyzed by a fiscal committee.

COMMENTS:

Author's Statement: According to the author, "Providing clean transportation assistance to health care for seniors and those living with disabilities in areas that already have enormous barriers to health care access and, in many cases, live in communities that suffer from poor air quality, would help increase access to care for vulnerable populations while also improving local air quality and reducing overall emissions, thus providing significant health benefits to the populations that live in disadvantaged areas and throughout the state."

BACKGROUND:

California has many seniors and people with disabilities who suffer from chronic, serious illnesses that limit their mobility and who live in rural, mountain or desert communities throughout the state. Resources for non-emergency medical transportation are limited in those communities, and, where they are available, the vehicles used in those communities use fuels that contribute to air pollution.

Significantly, these disadvantages that contribute to a lack of access to health care result in higher morbidity and mortality rates compared to those of their urban counterparts. Addressing geographic distance and transportation difficulties for elderly and disabled patients is a cost-effective way of improving the quality of life and health outcomes for vulnerable populations, while utilizing zero-emission or near-zero emission vehicles to reduce transportation barriers provides the important co-benefit of improving local air quality and reducing emissions.

Rural populations experience many difficulties in accessing health care services, with one of the key barriers being transportation. In rural areas, residents need to travel greater distances to access different parts of the health care system, which in addition to having less access to public transportation, is a substantial barrier to health care.

At the same time, elderly individuals and individuals with disabilities have greater health care needs than other rural residents, and living in rural areas causes them additional difficulties. The Rural Health Information Hub states that rural populations most likely to need transportation services to maintain their health and well-being include seniors and people with disabilities.

According to a study entitled *Traveling Towards Disease: Transportation Barriers to Health Care Access*, it was noted that "Millions of Americans face transportation barriers.

Transportation barriers lead to rescheduled or missed appointments, delayed care, and missed or delayed medication use. These consequences may lead to poorer management of chronic illness and thus poorer health outcomes."

It also noted that among the elderly reporting any barrier to health care access, 21 percent reported having transportation barriers. Studies conducted by the American Hospital Associations have shown that transportation barriers are the third leading cause of missing a medical appointment for seniors across the country. Another study by Health Outreach Partners identified transportation as the second most prevalent barrier to accessing health care services among underserved populations. In addition to transportation barriers, the same study also showed that living in a rural area was a top barrier to health care access.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER:

Are Greenhouse Gas Reduction Funds and the Air Quality Improvement Funds the appropriate use of funds for this grant program? For example, the Air Resources Board has numerous programs to provide funding and incentives for the purchase of National Zero Emissions Vehicles (NZEV) and Zero-Emission Vehicles (ZEV). Another example is, the Clean Vehicle Rebate Program (CVRP) that provides up to \$7,000 to California residents who purchase or lease a new NZEV or ZEV. Public agencies can get up to 30 rebates annually. Also, are low carbon transportation dollars more appropriate funding source? Additionally, Area Agencies on Aging are not typically the primary providers of transportation in an area and would have to develop the capacity to run a transportation program.

Because this bill is double refereed to the Transportation Committee which will hear the bill next, is it the more appropriate committee to work those issues out?

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**Support**

Imperial County Area Agency on Aging Public Administrator
Two individuals.

Opposition

None on file.

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