



Memorandum

TO: MAYOR LICCARDO

FROM: Councilmember Mahan

SUBJECT: BUDGET DOCUMENT

DATE: May 27, 2021

Approved *Matt Mahan*

Date: May 27, 2021

RECOMMENDATION

Complete a one-year pilot program to gather more information on the battery life, charging time and efficacy of electric-powered leaf blowers in a variety of common situations (wet leaves, pine needles, etc. to assess true ongoing labor costs) as a step toward a transitioning away from gas powered leaf blowers.

Proposal

Program/Project Title: City-Owned Electric Leaf Blower Pilot

Amount of City Funding Required: \$33,537

This change is:

One-time Ongoing

Cost Estimate Number (if applicable):

Proposal Description, including the reason for the need and anticipated outcomes (Please describe how the proposal will affect services for San José residents, community groups, businesses, etc.):

In a 2011 study, two-stroke leaf blowers generated 23 times the carbon monoxide and nearly 300 times more non-methane hydrocarbons than a crew cab pickup. To put that in perspective, you'd have to drive a Ford F-150 Raptor truck for 3,887 miles, or the distance from Northern Texas to Anchorage, Alaska to equal the hydrocarbon emissions of about a half-hour of yard work with a two-stroke leaf blower.

Noise pollution is also an issue. It's not merely an inconvenience; we may be opening ourselves up to legal liability due to harm to the hearing of City employees. According to the CDC, using a gas-powered leaf-blower for two hours has an adverse impact on your hearing. Some emit between 80 and 85 decibels (dB) while in use.

Most cheap or mid-range leaf blowers, however, can expose users to up to 112 decibels (a plane taking off generates 105 decibels). At this level, they can cause instant “pain and ear injury,” with “hearing loss possible in less than [2 to] 5 minutes”.

So not only would this pilot be a step forward in helping San Jose achieve its Climate Smart Goals, but it would also protect City employees and residents who enjoy our open spaces from harmful emissions and noise pollution.

20 other California cities have already enacted gas-powered leaf blower bans, including Oakland, Los Angeles, and Los Gatos, so San Jose is already a step behind its neighbors and peer cities.

However, as the amount of staff time and other associated costs of switching to the battery-powered model are uncertain, the PRNS could complete a one-year pilot program to gather more information on battery life, charging time and efficacy in a variety of common situations (wet leaves, pine needles, etc. to assess true ongoing labor costs). This pilot would be tested on three routes in various park districts. Three battery operated blowers (\$9,552 plus tax, totaling \$10,412) would need to be purchased for this pilot. Staffing of 0.5 FTE Maintenance Assistant PT will be needed to complete blowing surfaces on these three routes. The Department would share preliminary results in February 2022 as part of the Sustainable Park Maintenance memo.

| Fund | 2021-2022 Cost | Ongoing Cost |
|---|-----------------------|---------------------|
| General Fund | | |
| Personal Services | \$23,125 | TBD |
| NP (Supplies and Materials) | \$10,412 | TBD |
| Other Funds (list funds below, if applicable) | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| TOTAL | \$33,537 | TBD |

Position Changes (if applicable):

| Position Classification | 2021-2022 FTE | Ongoing FTE |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Maintenance Assistant PT | 0.5 | TBD |
| | | |
| TOTAL | 0.5 | TBD |

This pilot would allow San Jose to ease into such a possible future ban, while also getting ahead of possible state legislation such as Assemblymember Berman’s AB 1336, which would ban the purchase of gas-powered leaf blowers, lawnmowers and other “small off-road engines” in 2024.

Funding Source

Essential Services Reserve:

Other (Please specify program/project/fund):

| Fund | 2021-2022 Cost | Ongoing Cost |
|---|-----------------------|---------------------|
| General Fund | | |
| Personal Services | \$23,125 | TBD |
| NP (Supplies and Materials) | \$10,412 | TBD |
| Other Funds (list funds below, if applicable) | | |
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| | | |
| TOTAL | \$33,537 | TBD |

Position Changes (if applicable):

| Position Classification | 2021-2022 FTE | Ongoing FTE |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Maintenance Assistant PT | 0.5 | TBD |
| | | |
| TOTAL | 0.5 | TBD |

Department or Organization Contact

Please list the contact information for the individual that certified cost estimates contained within your recommendation:

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