



Interim Report of Dane County Staff Team Findings on Car Camping/Safe Parking

Casey Becker – Division Administrator

Melissa Mennig – Project Housing Program Specialist

Housing Access and Affordability

Health and Human Needs Committee – 09/28/2023

Introduction

- Resolution directing County staff to report on potential car camping options for people experiencing homelessness approved by the Dane County Board in November of 2021.
- Interim recommendations were delivered to HHN in 2021.
- Feedback Received, Phase 1 and 2:
 - Dane County Human Services
 - Dane County Land and Water Resources
 - Dane County Planning and Development
 - Tamara D. Grigsby Office of Equity and Inclusion
 - Dane County Corporation Counsel
 - Dane County Risk Management
 - Alliant Energy Center
 - Public Health Madison Dane County
 - People with Lived Expertise
 - Service Providers

Where we have been?

- Previous Report from HAA
 - Researched various safe parking program models nationally
 - Researched State of Wisconsin campground license requirements
 - Other program models similar to safe parking were identified that were better suited to the weather elements in WI. (ex: Dairy Drive)
 - No Dane County-owned properties suitable for safe parking were located in the City of Madison.
 - Next step identified: Conversations with people with lived experience of car camping due to homelessness (why was sheltering in vehicles preferred to shelter, what program might best fit their needs, etc.).

Phase 2: Goals

1. Learn more about scope of the issue in Dane County
 - How many households, demographics, reasons for car camping.
2. Identify the needs of local population in a safe parking program.
3. Identify cost estimates for different staffing models

Current Engagement Activities

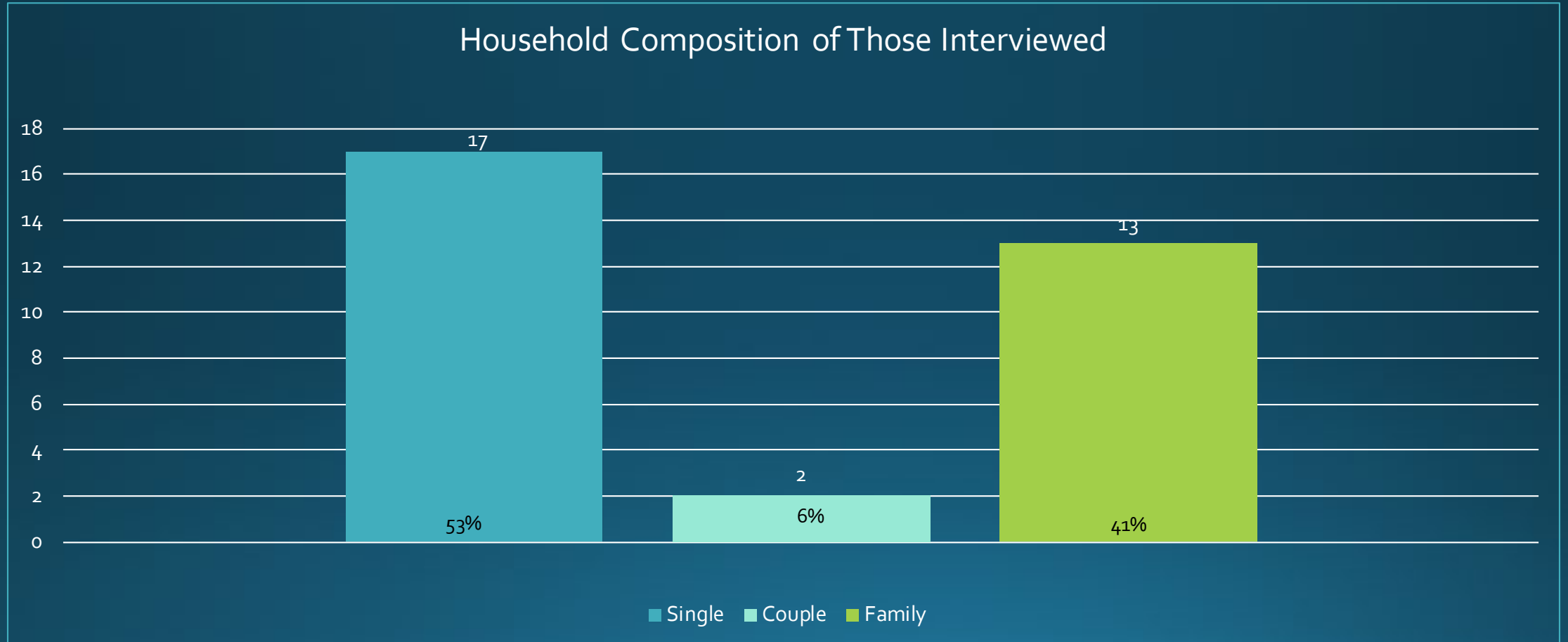
- Gathered input from providers
 - Met regularly with Street Outreach providers and created a Google form for them to complete with clients regarding safe parking.
 - Bethel Lutheran Church staff
 - TEP staff
 - Dairy Drive staff
- Point in Time (PIT)
 - Worked with PIT committee to develop questions to add to the PIT survey on safe parking
- Diversion
 - Collaborated with diversion case managers to survey families sleeping in vehicles
- Street Outreach
 - Conducted in-person outreach interviews at known locations with people sleeping in vehicles.
- Researched other safe parking programs and models
 - Interviewed staff from a safe parking program in Green Bay, WI- Wise Women Gathering Place.
 - Attended conferences on unsheltered homelessness and car camping.
 - Generated a list of local congregations who may be interested in hosting scattered model.

Scope: How many people are car camping in a given night in Dane County?

- Point in Time Count (PIT)
 - 16 people in 2023
 - 21 people in 2022
- Feedback from providers
 - Catalyst for Change: 10 individuals and 5 families at a given time.
 - Tiny House Village reported 30 car campers when they were taking applications.
 - Bethel Homeless Ministry: 4-5 people interested in safe parking over the past 3 months.
 - Transition Education Program- Get calls for about 3 families a week.
- Known locations
 - 57 vehicles over 4 months
 - Average: 14-15 cars in two busiest locations each separate outreach engagement.
- Outreach case conferencing
 - 15 household sleep in vehicle at least some of the time.
- Based on the numbers observed, if Dane County moves forward with a Safe Parking Program, a pilot of 15-30 parking stalls should be considered.

Participant Feedback

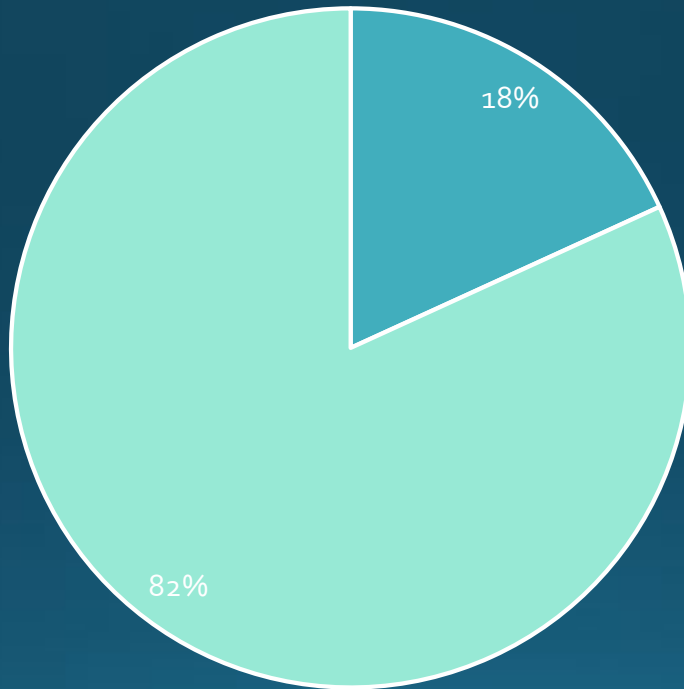
Household Composition: 32 household Interviews Conducted



Top Reasons Interviewed Households are Car Camping

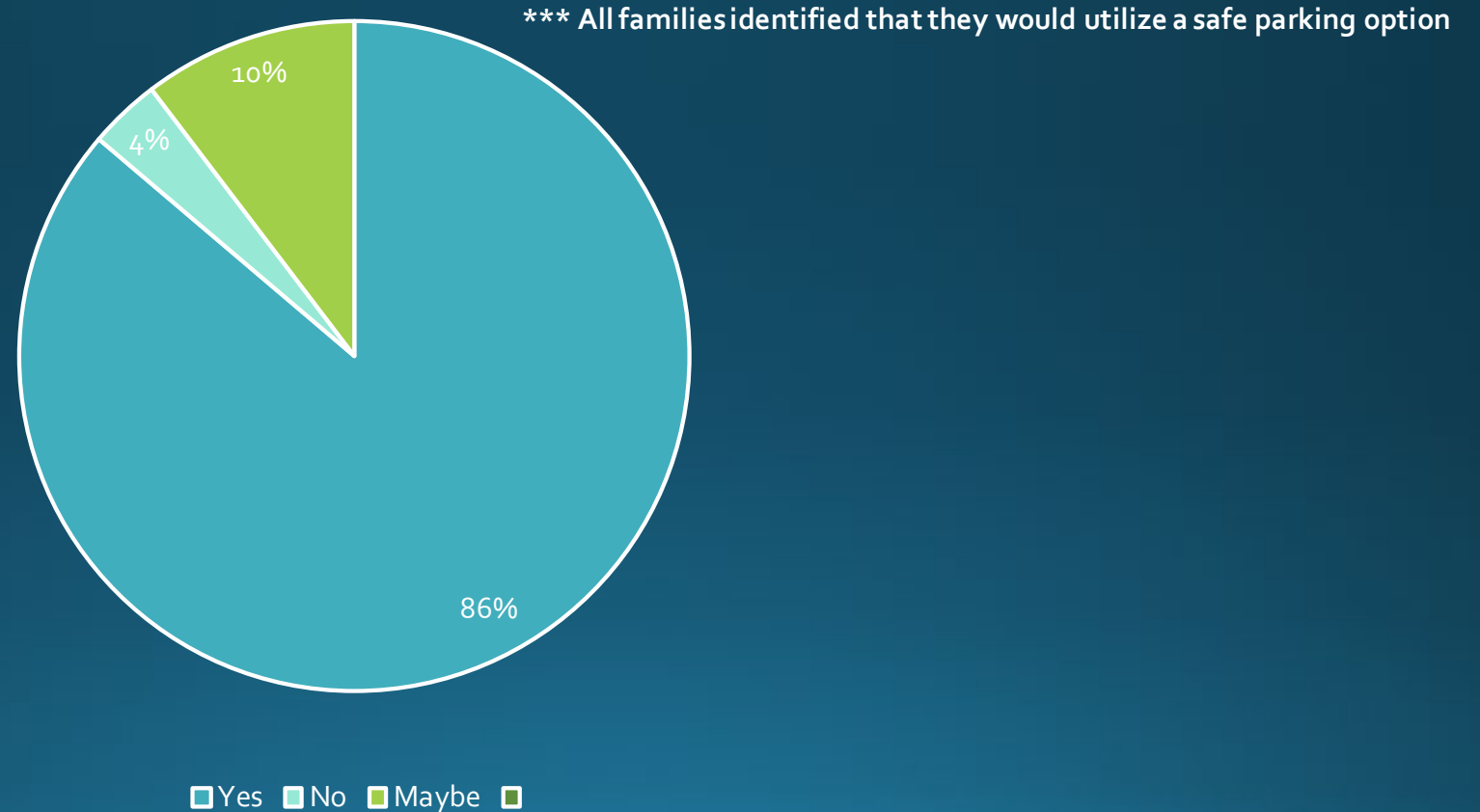
- Shelter too crowded-Want privacy
- No availability of shelter for family (*100% of family responses)
- Unsafe experience in shelter
- AODA or mental health related reason
- Too many shelter rules
- Pets
- Sex offender registry
- Not enough income/Fixed income
- Evicted and can't find housing
- Cost of living too high in an apartment
- Fleeing domestic violence
- Part of a couple
- Traveling camper (Lifestyle)

Do you have a pet?

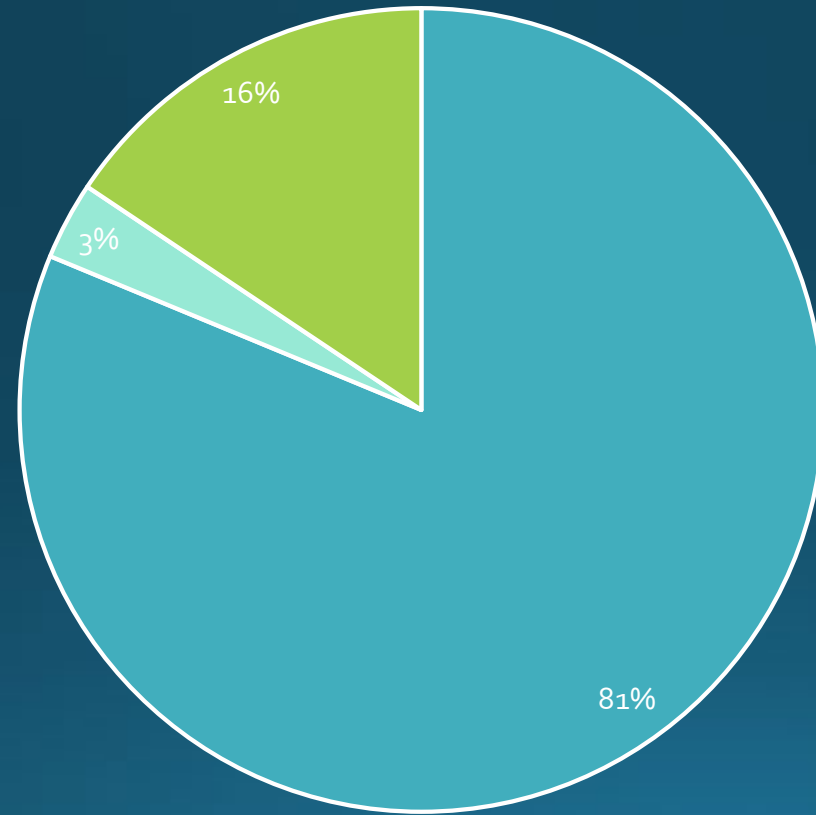


Yes No

If there was a designated legal parking area for people who are unhoused, would you utilize it?



If there was a safe alternative housing option to car camping, would you prefer that option?



Yes No Maybe

AODA/Mental Health Needs

- Of the interviews conducted, staff observed a portion of the population seemed to be struggling with AODA or MH concerns, although this question wasn't asked.
- Would assume this population has similar needs as what we see in shelter or outreach programs locally. (HMIS Agency Data)
 - Shelter
 - 37% Mental health disorder
 - 6% Alcohol use disorder
 - 6% Drug use disorder
 - 5% Both alcohol and drug use disorder
 - Outreach
 - 62% MH disorder
 - 12% Alcohol disorder
 - 13% Drug disorder
 - 15% Both alcohol and drug disorder

Features to Consider for a Safe Parking Program for Those Interviewed

- Showers, restrooms, water, electricity for charging phones, Wi-Fi, security cameras
- At least one car space between vehicles, not downtown-a little further out, access to grill
- Most people prefer campground setting with grass and shade to parking lot
- Car repair fund attached to the program
- Proximity to a gas station
- Support services to transition from the car to an apartment
- Different models for families vs singles

Features to Consider for a Safe Parking Program- Cont.

- Differing opinions from those interviewed on the following items:
 - Fencing around parking location
 - Allowing pets; pet relief area
 - Parking programs in church parking lots
 - Mixed opinion on whether a bigger(20-50 parking spots) or smaller lot (2-5 parking spots) made people more comfortable

Other Thoughts Shared by Interviewees

- “Need more options for registered sex offenders to get housing - that's my main barrier.”
- “I am concerned that there will be a lot of drug use or violent behavior in a group spot, and I might not use it depending on who else is using it.”
- “There aren't any safe places to park. The police ask me to leave anywhere I find.”
- “Would want to have at least a one parking spot sized area between each car for some semblance of privacy. Restrooms (with showers if possible) onsite would also be good. An area that's not just a parking lot but has trees and other greenery makes a huge difference. It improves mental health, and being parked in the shade in the summer time makes it much more tolerable. Since gas money is usually an issue being within walking distance of a store is nice too.”
- “What is safe? Is it only for the night? Would rather money was spent on land for homes.”
- “Would be interested at parking at a designated location but would want additional information. Currently moving around frequently to avoid police contact”.
- Many people were not connected to Outreach teams.

Feedback from Providers Regarding a Safe Parking Program

- Positives
 - Easier to locate people
 - Saves time
 - Easier to coordinate efforts between teams and service delivery
- Concerns
 - Abandoned vehicles and trash- Recommend no RVs.
 - Families/Singles separate spaces
 - Duration
 - Capacity and waitlist
 - Eligibility and intake process
 - Cost to implement safe parking vs permanent housing solutions
 - Sustained funding

Before a program can operate, legal requirements will need to be met, most notably the State of Wisconsin's laws for campground licensing.

- State law is umbrella over other local ordinances for overnight parking or camping.
- State law directs that a campground license is required when:
 - A person offers or intends to offer 3 or fewer campsites and advertises to the public an offer to camp
OR Four or more campsites exist regardless of advertising or outreach to the public.
- Also sets limits for:
 - Length of time is allowed (8 continuous months in a 12 month period).
 - Distance between sites (10 feet).
 - How many people per site (6 people or one family unit).
 - Site amenities: Safe drinking water, hand washing stations, toilet building (or approved alternative) with safe walkways to facilities, garbage disposal and pick up, 24-7 emergency phone, pest control.
 - Sites larger than 400 square feet need to be fully plumbed.

Budgets Nationally for Safe Parking

- Budgets vary widely based on size of program, land costs, staffing structure, hours of operation and use of volunteers.
- Examples:
 - City of Santa Rosa, CA: 50 vehicles: 24/7 program
 - Without wrap-around services: \$1,113,250
 - With wrap-around services: \$1,299,826
 - Seattle: 25 cars and RVs: 24/7 program
 - With wrap-around services: \$1.5 million
 - ICAC in Oakland: 25 parking spaces: 7:00pm-7:00am
 - Without wrap-around services: \$250,000
 - Use church lots, pay participants as lot monitors, no wrap-around services-partner with other non-profits for services, laundry, showers.

Wise Women Gathering Place Cost Estimate

- Budget- \$195,000/year for 26 parking spots
 - Staffing costs \$103,000- Supervisor, 3 safety monitors, intake person
 - Hours of Operation- 6pm-9am
 - Budget doesn't include cost of land, garbage or snow removal (Oneida Nation provides.)
 - Churches supply meals, basic survival gear and gas cards
 - No showers
 - No cameras or security companies

Cost Estimates: Safe Parking Program for 30 Vehicles in Dane County

Program Cost: 24/7 Staffing

Description	Total
M - F Daytime Housing/Mental Health Focused Social Worker, LCSW	\$ 85,280
M-F Daytime Housing/Substance Abuse Focused Social Worker	\$ 62,400
M-F Housing Focused Social Workers	\$ 52,000
M - F Evening 5pm - 2am, 6 hour shifts, holiday support	\$ 84,240
Weekend, 8 hour shifts Sat and Sunday	\$ 51,480
Program Coordinator	\$ 52,000
On call pay 11pm - 9am, holidays	\$ 45,000
Total salaries	\$ 432,400
Taxes	\$ 42,080
Benefits	\$ 45,000
Total Salaries + benefits	\$ 519,480
Client transportation - bus passes, license/registration, cabs as needed, vehicle repairs	\$ 35,600
Mileage - housing, medical, SSI, ADRC, supplies, etc.	\$ 28,800
Devices - phones, tablets, computer parts	\$ 5,000
Phone Plans	\$ 3,000
Basic Needs Supplies - pillow, blankets, laundry soap, etc	\$ 10,000
Cleaning supplies and toilet paper/hand towels etc	\$ 10,000
Internet/Site phone	\$ 1,500
Handwashing Station (2)	\$ 3,600
Dumpster	\$ 2,715
Porta Potties (3)	\$ 8,333
Snow Plow	\$ 5,000
Supplemental Food	\$ 20,000
Maintenance Supplies and Tools	\$ 10,000
Security Cameras	\$ 20,000
Showers	\$ 30,000
Additional insurance requirements	\$ 5,000
Subtotal	\$ 718,028
10% admin costs/unknowns - staff training, additional office space, accounting, phone system, single audit, office furniture	\$ 71,803
Total	\$ 789,831

Program Cost: Evening Staffing Only

Description	Total
M-F Second Shift (2 positions)	\$ 83,200
M-F Third Shift (2 positions)	\$ 83,200
Weekend Case Manager, Second Shift	\$ 33,280
Weekend Case Manager, Third Shift	\$ 33,280
Program Coordinator	\$ 52,000
Total salaries	\$ 284,960
Taxes	\$ 33,620
Benefits	\$ 37,000
Total Salaries + benefits	\$ 355,580
Client transportation - bus passes, license/registration, cabs as needed, vehicle repairs	\$ 35,600
Mileage - housing, medical, SSI, ADRC, supplies, etc.	\$ 14,000
Devices - phones, tablets, computer parts	\$ 3,000
Phone Plans	\$ 2,000
Basic Needs Supplies - pillow, blankets, laundry soap, etc	\$ 10,000
Cleaning supplies and toilet paper/hand towels etc	\$ 10,000
Internet/Site phone	\$ 1,500
Handwashing Station (2)	\$ 3,600
Dumpster	\$ 2,715
Porta Potties (3)	\$ 8,333
Snow Plow	\$ 5,000
Supplemental Food	\$ 20,000
Maintenance Supplies and Tools	\$ 10,000
Security Cameras	\$ 20,000
Showers	\$ 30,000
Additional insurance requirements	\$ 5,000
Subtotal	\$ 536,328
10% admin costs/unknowns - staff training, additional office space, accounting, phone system, single audit, office furniture	\$ 53,633
Total	\$ 589,961

Additional Cost Considerations

- Land costs
- Infrastructure cost needed for water, electricity, plumbing to comply with campground regulations
- Emergency weather hotels
- Utility usage
- Security company
- Fencing or gate
- Towing of vehicles
- Cleaning costs
- Food costs
- Other specialized support service costs

Alternate Strategies to Safe Parking Program

- Increase shelter capacity, especially for families
- Increase capacity for domestic violence shelter beds
- Lower barrier shelters
- Longer hours of shelter operation
- Increased street outreach services and providers
- Increased homeless prevention funding (eviction prevention and diversion)
- Policy changes
 - Identify laws that criminalize car camping
 - Target screening requirements for housing

Melissa Mennig

Mennig.Melissa@countyofdane.com

Questions?