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Supervisors Approve Temporary Shelter for Homeless during Rains

A plan to provide emergency shelter beds for the homeless during El Niño rainstorms at the unused Santa Ana Transit Terminal was approved Friday by the Board of Supervisors in a special meeting held so the beds could be prepared before expected weekend rain.

By a unanimous vote of those attending, Board of Supervisors [Chairwoman Lisa Bartlett](#), Vice Chair Michelle Steel and Supervisor Shawn Nelson approved an interim lease with the Orange County Transportation Authority for short-term use of the terminal. The plan was authorized earlier this week by the Federal Transit Administration, whose approval was required.

"There was an urgency to get everything in place so we can move people into a safe and dry place when it rains," Board Chairwoman Bartlett, Fifth District, said. "I'm proud that this Board has one voice and one vision to help all of our residents no matter where they live."

Board Vice Chair Michelle Steel said Friday's approval was another step in a comprehensive plan to address homelessness and to help people transition to permanent housing.

"Homelessness is a difficult problem and we are committed to doing what we can to stop having people unsheltered on the streets," Vice Chair Steel, Second District, said.

Supervisor Nelson said Board members asked in December for rainy season shelter options. Officials moved as swiftly as possible, he said, despite frustrations at what seemed a long process.

"Getting someone into a shelter three weeks after it rains doesn't help anybody and it took longer than it should but we were able to advance the timeline and get it done," Supervisor Nelson, Fourth District, said.

[Supervisor Andrew Do](#), who was unable to attend Friday's meeting, had directed County staff to work with federal lobbyists and OCTA to find a faster solution to using the abandoned bus terminal.

"This emergency shelter will help alleviate suffering in the short-term, and Orange County staff are working with Mercy House to begin preparations of the bus terminal site," Supervisor Do, First District, said. "But it's only one small part of our long-term response to homelessness."

Supervisor Todd Spitzer also was unable to attend Friday's meeting but earlier this week praised the Federal Transit Authority's approval of the terminal's short-term use.

“We have a moral and ethical duty to protect the homeless, and to provide a safe and clean place for our county employees and the citizens who come to the Civic Center for services,” Supervisor Spitzer, Third District, said.

The County has contracted with non-profit shelter operator Mercy House to manage emergency shelter beds at the transit terminal and elsewhere, as well as provide transportation services for those caught outside during rainstorms. The County will continue to use National Guard armories in Fullerton and Santa Ana for night-time shelter and other services, including meals, showers and medical services.

The interim lease with OCTA calls for the County to pay \$11,615 a month for emergency use of the terminal property. Providing meals or other services onsite is not permitted under the lease.

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