

Regional Network Management Council

March 25, 2024

Agenda Item 4b

Accessibility Initiatives Update

Subject:

An overview of the five accessibility-related initiatives outlined in the Transit Transformation Action Plan, with a focus on one-seat ride pilots in the Bay Area as we prepare for future pilots.

Background:

The Transformation Action Plan (Action Plan) identified five desired outcomes with associated near-term action items to achieve a more connected, efficient, and user-focused mobility network. One outcome was “Accessibility: Transit services for older adults, people with disabilities, and those with lower incomes are coordinated efficiently,” and with it came five actions, listed in Attachment A: Transformation Action Plan Accessibility Initiatives. Staff has begun work on four of five accessibility initiatives. An update of activities is provided below.

One-Seat Ride Pilot Program

Action 22 of the Transformation Action Plan is to “fund additional subregional one-seat Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit ride pilots and develop cost-sharing policies for cross-jurisdictional ADA paratransit trips.”

As with fixed routes, traveling across transit agency service boundaries on a paratransit ride necessitates a transfer between systems. Although paratransit transfer trips account for approximately 10% of all paratransit trips, they have an outsized impact on operations. While riders only need to book the trip through the agency managing the trip origination, transit agencies take considerable resources and time to book, schedule, dispatch, and deliver a cross-jurisdictional paratransit trip. The trip can be very expensive for both the agency and the rider, take several hours, and be arduous for the rider due to the transfer process. Transfers often do not go smoothly, leaving riders in potentially vulnerable situations while awaiting their next vehicle. Instead, a one-seat paratransit ride is a trip to a rider’s final destination without transferring vehicles when crossing transit agency service boundaries.

During COVID, County Connection headed up a pilot for Contra Costa county transit agencies to deliver one-seat inter-jurisdictional paratransit trips. Similarly, Santa Rosa CityBus and Sonoma County Transit began providing one-seat paratransit rides. Building upon the work done by Contra Costa County and Sonoma County transit agencies, MTC's One-Seat Ride Pilot Program is intended to test different concepts for delivering non-transfer paratransit trips to improve paratransit service for riders traveling across transit agency boundaries.

Developing One-Seat Ride Pilot Concepts

Staff developed a draft list of service concepts for delivering a non-transfer paratransit trip. The draft concepts list also provides background on existing Bay Area one-seat ride pilots and proposes methods to focus pilot service on existing transfer trip demand. In September 2023, staff held two information sessions with the transit agency and contracted paratransit staff and two information sessions with members of the Bay Area's nine county-based paratransit coordinating councils to discuss the concepts, receive feedback, and field questions about the pilot program. Following these meetings, staff revised the draft concepts (Attachment B, Transformation Action Plan One-Seat Ride Pilot Program Draft Concepts) to include more examples of non-transfer paratransit trips service within the Bay Area.

Next Steps on One-Seat Ride Pilots

Staff is seeking feedback on the program concepts and the considerations to focus service on existing trip demand. One million dollars has been preliminarily identified for the program and aims to fund three one-year pilots. Staff will work cooperatively with transit agency staff to develop pilot proposals over the coming months and anticipates returning in late spring with the pilot proposals. Following pilot awards, staff will work with transit agency staff to evaluate the pilot projects.

Later in 2024, staff will begin working on the second part of Action 22, which will examine formal and informal cost-sharing agreements for cross-jurisdictional paratransit trips, and potentially develop new cost-sharing agreements. This work will also include evaluating and identifying safer transfer points and policies for cross-jurisdictional paratransit trips.

Other Accessibility Initiatives Updates:

Staff has also been working on other accessibility action items.

- Action 21: staff has begun developing stakeholder lists for holding county-based mobility management meetings, which will be held in later in 2024 and into 2025.
- Action 23: MTC has executed a contract with paratransit software company Trapeze and will begin developing an API that will connect Clipper Next Gen with paratransit software. Once the API is developed, it will be tested on a pilot basis later in 2024 on SF Paratransit. Following the testing phase, the API will be rolled out to the rest of the region.
- Action 24: Staff has not begun work on this initiative but will begin later this summer.
- Action 25, staff, in cooperation with transit agency staff, has developed a report which contains best practice research and draft recommendations towards a more standard approach to determining paratransit eligibility across the region. This draft report will be shared with the Council later this spring.

Issues:

None identified

Recommendations:

Information and Feedback

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Transformation Action Plan Accessibility Initiatives
- Attachment B: Transformation Action Plan One-Seat Ride Pilot Program: Background and Considerations for Discussion, December 2023
- Attachment C: One-Seat Ride Pilot Program Slide Presentation