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Transformation Action Plan One-Seat Ride Pilot Program: Background and Considerations for Discussion (*December 2023*)

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Concept of the One-Seat Ride Pilot Program

A One-Seat Ride (OSR) program provides ADA paratransit rides across existing transit agency service-area boundaries without requiring a transfer. OSR service should continue to be shared-ride service to the extent possible.

The intent of the OSR pilot program is to focus service principally on ADA paratransit trips that are currently being made with transfers. Since paratransit vehicle transfers would no longer need to be coordinated, riders would receive more convenient service while transit agencies (in theory) could achieve cost savings or, at least, avoid incurring added costs. Testing whether this mutual benefit is achievable in practice is one of the aims of the OSR pilot program.

Existing One-Seat Ride Delivery Models in the Bay Area

a. **Limited overlapping service. Each agency serves its own customers**

Example: Santa Rosa CityBus and Sonoma County Transit (SCT)

SCT already operates within Santa Rosa with at least two routes that go all the way through the city, but its ADA service area leaves out much of the city. Under their agreement, SCT now takes its customers to and from anywhere in the Santa Rosa ADA area. Typically, this would take an SCT paratransit vehicle no more than a mile beyond the strict ADA paratransit service area.

For its part, Santa Rosa, whose ADA service area roughly corresponds to the city limits, takes its customers to and from points within the SCT ADA corridors extending roughly two miles beyond the Santa Rosa ADA area.

This arrangement requires no on-going coordination or cost-sharing agreement between the two agencies and allows riders to arrange their trips using procedures they are already familiar with. The arrangement was implemented during the pandemic as a way to reduce contact between riders and drivers.

Application: Where two agencies with overlapping service areas maintain separate ADA paratransit operations. Any two agencies with adjoining service areas could agree to extend their service by a limited amount, creating areas of service overlap that would include many of the most-desired cross-boundary trips.

b. Service beyond existing corridors within another agency's service area

Example: Golden Gate Transit and East Bay Paratransit (EBP) service in San Francisco

Both Golden Gate and East Bay Paratransit (BART) have obligations within San Francisco, including trips to and from limited corridors in San Francisco and Marin / the East Bay respectively. Both Golden Gate and EBP provide one-seat ride trips for their customers to and from anywhere in San Francisco and their home jurisdiction. This includes customers who live in San Francisco. Without this arrangement, transfers would need to be arranged between San Francisco Paratransit and both Golden Gate and EBP. In consideration of the effort that San Francisco is spared by this arrangement, the San Francisco Paratransit pays a portion of the trip cost.

Application: Applies where one agency already has an ADA paratransit obligation in a neighboring jurisdiction.

c. Third-party, non-dedicated operators for non-overlapping areas

Example: Solano Inter-city Taxi

The Solano Transportation Authority STA (aka Solano Mobility) operates a taxi subsidy program that allows ADA paratransit registrants to travel between jurisdictions within Solano County. This enables ADA registrants to travel between Vallejo/Benicia, Fairfield, Vacaville, Rio Vista, and Dixon. The system uses a prepaid card. Credit available for taxi rides can be purchased in increments of \$100 for \$40 (or \$20 for qualified low-income users). Accessible vehicles are available, operated by a separate vendor. Fares are based on a zone system. Some representative fares (before the discount) are:

- Vallejo – Fairfield: \$65

- Fairfield – Vacaville: \$35
- Vacaville – Dixon: \$35

STA's scope is the entire county, but taxis are licensed by individual cities. As a result, users typically need to call two different companies for their going and return trips.

Application: In principle, a similar program could be created wherever two agencies have non-overlapping (or minimally overlapping) service areas. There may be few other cases where an umbrella agency covering multiple agencies could implement a similar program. Where there is no appropriate umbrella agency, the transit agencies would need to negotiate some division of responsibilities for a joint program. Although the Solano program uses taxis, a similar program could use TNCs instead of taxis. A wheelchair accessible option would be required.

d. **Dedicated Contractor**

Example: Contra Costa County One Seat Regional Ride Program

County Connection contracts for one-seat ride service on behalf of itself, Tri-Delta Transit, WestCAT, and LAVTA (East Bay Paratransit does not participate). County Connection bills the participating transit agencies based on miles of service provided to riders within each of their service areas.

The contract is with County Connection's regular provider of ADA paratransit service, Transdev. Transdev in turn contracts with a supplemental provider that works with a flexible pool of independent contractors. This arrangement reduces costs compared to using the regular paratransit fleet, both because the supplemental provider has lower rates and because the regular fleet vehicles are not sent out of the service area. However, there are times when the supplemental provider is unable to provide a trip, resulting in the need for a "rescue trip" provided using CCCTA's regular ADA paratransit fleet.

Application: In principle any agency could administer a similar program for itself and one or more adjoining agencies.

e. **One agency extends service into a neighboring jurisdiction**

Examples: SamTrans service into Santa Clara; WestCAT service to Richmond and San Pablo

The San Mateo County Transit District (SamTrans) operates some routes in Santa Clara County, but provides ADA paratransit even beyond that, including three specific destinations: the Palo Alto Veterans Administration Medical Center; the Vista Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired; and the REACH program. These

locations provide unique services that are not available in San Mateo County. SamTrans does not plan to add more locations.

The Western Contra Costa Transit Authority (WestCAT) provides trips for medical appointments and county services to and from the neighboring cities of San Pablo and Richmond. The service is limited certain hours on weekdays. It avoids the need to arrange a transfer and only takes a vehicle five to ten minutes out of the way.

Application: Applies where an agency can include specific destinations that are requested frequently by its riders and would not cause undue hardship for existing service.

Considerations to Focus One-Seat Ride Service on Existing Transfer Trip Demand

One-Seat Ride service is not a required component of ADA paratransit since it requires operation beyond any one agency's ¾-mile corridor. Therefore, other ADA service criteria regarding fares, trip limits, service hours, etc. do not apply either. This allows for multiple ways to manage cross-jurisdiction trip demand, to keep it similar to the existing level of demand.

Managing demand will allow the pilot program to extend limited funding in order to test multiple concepts on the existing trip demand. Some demand management features to focus the pilots that may be appropriate are listed below.

a. Limited-service area

One concern about one-seat ride service is that vehicles can be taken far from an operator's core service area, resulting in a lot of unproductive vehicle time that is unavailable for ADA-mandated service. To address this concern, one-seat ride service could be restricted to areas where providing service would require the least amount of unproductive travel beyond an agency's service area. These are also likely to be where there is the greatest demand and, as a result, the greatest opportunity to reduce transfers. The Sonoma County program described earlier is an example of a limited-service area one-seat ride program.

b. Limited number of trips per person

Although the ADA regulations prohibit trip limits, no such prohibition would apply to a one-seat ride program. A per rider monthly trip limit would extend program benefits to a broader number of riders. In the same vein, subscription trips (trips on a repeated or

recurring basis, such as to school, work, religious services, dialysis treatment, etc.) could also be excluded from the pilot.

c. Non-standard fare

Currently, the fare of a transfer trip is the combined fare of the two participating agency's fares. One-seat ride fares could be assessed at using other methods, including distance-based and means-based. It would be reasonable to charge up to an amount equivalent to the combined fares of the two participating agencies.

d. Specific times of service

It may be possible to create a quasi-scheduled shuttle service that would provide trips between specified destinations in each agency's service area. In practice, there are few examples of such service. Soltrans at one time attempted to provide scheduled paratransit service for its riders linking to East Bay Paratransit but found it operationally difficult. Shopping shuttles (described below under "Trip purpose limitations") may be a more feasible concept.

e. Off-peak hours only

Transit agency's may be concerned about one-seat rides taking much-needed vehicles far from the regular service area, so it is not available to carry ADA-mandated trips. A one-seat ride pilot limited to off-peak hours would minimize this issue. Paratransit demand typically peaks around 8 AM and around 2 PM, so off-peak service may result in have very limited hours.

f. Trip purpose limitations

Trips could be limited to certain purposes, for example shopping or medical appointments. In the case of shopping trips, an agency could establish a flexible shuttle service that goes to specific destinations, typically local shopping complexes. Typically, a vehicle collects riders at their homes and goes to the shopping location for that day where the driver may wait for an hour or so before returning to riders' homes. Typically, a weekly schedule identifies a specific location for each day of the week. (San Francisco operates a program of this type, limited to destinations within San Francisco, called Shop-a-Round - <https://www.sfmta.com/getting-around/accessibility/shop-round.>)