

Same Day Ride Program Questions:

Responses from Paratransit Taxi Task Force Subcommittee

March 5 2024 meeting participants: Kevin Meyers, Don Natzke, Danita Jackson, Cheryl Orgas, Adrian Klenz, Barbara Beckert

March 9 2024 meeting participants: Kevin Meyers, Don Natzke, Danita Jackson, Cheryl Orgas, Emily Cadman, Brian Peters, Barbara Beckert

Subcommittee members met on March 5th and March 9th Meeting time was spent discussing and responding to the questions provided by Fran Musci from MCTS.

1. Is the goal for the program to provide a new service needed by paratransit riders or to generate cost savings for paratransit, or both?

Response: Not a new program. The goal is to bring back the paratransit taxi program with changes to comply with federal requirements and the limited budget. To improve service options for a same day service that is fiscally responsible. It is not a primary goal to save paratransit money.

2. Is this a same day safety net type service or is it designed to be a primary mode of transportation?

Response: It is a primary mode of transportation as a safety net for same day service for employment, health and wellness, for rides that cannot effectively be provided by paratransit or other alternatives.

3. Service limited to paratransit eligible riders? (I believe this is yes)

Response: Yes – service will be limited to paratransit eligible riders

4. Is there some sort of limit on trip purpose? (Ex: Medical, Employment, Groceries only?) What types of trips are specifically allowed?

Response: Starting with these parameters:

- employment, health and wellness that cannot be scheduled ahead of time.

Examples include:

Health and wellness

- Hospital discharge
- Same day medical or dental appointment due to illness or family member's illness
- Go to pharmacy same day
- .Emergency shelter, domestic abuse, natural disaster fire etc.

- Wellness – transportation for food emergency – transportation to emergency food shelter, grocery or meal site

Employment:

- If employee is called to come in to work on same day
- If other transportation for work does not show up
- If employee needs to leave work without advance notice due to illness or family responsibilities

5. What is the service area? A small “pilot” area? All of MKE County? Beyond MKE Co?

Response: The service area should be all of Milwaukee County at this time. Longer term it could be helpful to explore going across county lines especially for medical transportation.

6. How are trips requested and dispatched? Call provider directly? App? Centralized call center? – Who staffs call center? Can call takers be national/ international or do they have to be local? Specify how handle non-English speaking callers.

Response: Assuming the service is provided by a contracted agency, we would want them to set up a responsible system to receive and dispatch the rides. The system should incorporate standards for accessibility including linguistic accessibility for deaf and hard of hearing and non-English speakers. Should an outside

vendor not be found, services would be provided by MCTS using their systems.

We support the option to have an app, but other options for scheduling must also be offered to provide access to riders who do not have smart phone or computer access.

Follow standards MCTS has for non-english speakers including deaf and hard of hearing.

If a voucher type program is used, there will not be one model.

7. Booking: If the program has an online option, it must also have telephone option for those without smartphones/computers. The program cannot be structured for online bookings only.

Response: Agree

8. Do the various providers use their own scheduling software? If so how does MCTS/MCDOT get data for reporting

Response: These are important operational issues, but outside the scope of what consumer and advocate task force members can address.

9. Will they be private or shared rides? (There may be Title VI concerns with different fares for private vs shared rides. It

could be considered discriminatory to charge a person a higher fare for a private ride. Those with lower incomes would be forced to share rides which would not be equitable. More discussion probably needed on this?)

Response: Given the nature of this service, we would recommend that all rides would be private rides.

We agree that equity is important and had suggested a sliding scale based on income/ financial status.

10. How will riders who need a WAV be accommodated? Will MKE Co contract with one vendor to provide WAVs or will we require each vendor to provide WAVs or contract with a subcontractor for WAVs?

Response: We would want any respondent to demonstrate how they would provide equivalent service to people requiring an accessible vehicle. Whether they do it themselves directly or through a subcontract does not matter as long as it is comparable.

11. How is the program limited so that it does not undermine paratransit van service and stay within budget? Is there some sort of trip cap (XX trips/month). Do we set trip cap based on

paratransit use (Ride van more = more rides on alternative service)

Response(s): Providing a cap can be tricky – it may give a message that consumers should use a certain number of rides. What’s important is having some oversight to ensure rides are being used appropriately. It will be important to have strong performance from the paratransit van service so people are not turning to the same day cab program due to performance problems with the van service.

If people have a large number of rides, this should be reviewed to determine usage is appropriate and assess if there are better options for meeting their needs.

Some participants suggested a cap of 4 roundtrip rides per month. There was not consensus on this item.

12. Fares: Will the service charge a premium fare? What amount? Will payment be account based, cash, tickets (Transit Plus or other tickets)? How will app-based programs plan for riders who use cash?

Response: Yes, the service will charge a premium fare. There should be a modest upcharge for this service. We suggest that the fare be \$2 higher than paratransit. Provider(s) must be able to handle cash and other payment forms.

Additional recommendation: Reinstitute free bus pass for people who are paratransit eligible – this has saved money in the past and could incentivize more people to use the fixed route service.

13. What is the expectation for driver assistance? Curb to curb, door to door? Do they assist with packages and/or mobility aids?

Response:

We had a lot of discussion on this item. Some consensus around the following recommendation:

Curb to curb with option for door to door as a reasonable accommodation?

Assistance with mobility aids is a requirement for an accessible system.

Assistance with packages as an accommodation

Notes from the discussion of #13 for reference:

Taxi system was curb to curb. RFP was contradictory. Said it was to provide support for getting people in and out of vehicles.

Yes, should require drivers to provide assistance with mobility aids and packages. (Van service is limited to 2 bags and 40 pounds). This is consistent with Transdev policy.

Some variation of opinions from the subcommittee:

Prefer door to door. Need that with mobility devices.

We are looking for something taxi-equivalent, so realistically that would be curb to curb. Taxis, ride-sharing, etc. are all curb to curb. We understand the desire for door to door, but that'll be a significant addition to the cost for a system that's already going to be expensive.

More clarification needed. Curb to curb – what will that mean in terms of assisting people with mobility devices etc.

Door to door preferred

What are implications of door to door vs curb to curb

Having communication with driver would help to make curb to curb more feasible – an app and by phone.

14. What type of driver training is required?

Response: Disability etiquette and courtesy that addresses needs of varied population of people with disabilities.

Trainers should include people with disabilities. People with disabilities should have a role in development and approval of the curriculum.

Training on safety and legal requirements such as securing mobility devices, sighted guide.

Training should also be provided for all client contact staff.

15. What is the policy for packages, additional riders, Personal Care Attendants, service animals?

Response: Access for PCA and service animals is a requirement and non-negotiable. Must be able to ride and no additional charge. A parent, relative or guardian who is paratransit eligible should be able to ride with the child who they are accompanying to a medical appointment. A child who is paratransit eligible should be able to ride with their parent, guardian or other caregiver who is accompanying them to a medical appointment or other eligible service.

Check current definition of PCA – how is that defined, might not need all the detail about parents.

Assistance with carrying packages to door as an accommodation within the Transdev restrictions for packages

16. What hours will the service operate? What days of the week?

Response: Same as the fixed bus route

Seven days a week/ hours 6 AM – 10 PM

Need more late at night and weekend because there are more resource during the day.

Need dispatch and reservation to be available during the times.

6 AM – 10 PM suggested hours

17. What standards will be in place for pick up times, drop off times, wait times, ride durations?

Response: We would like more information from other same day programs. What standards are other programs using?

Need to check on federal standards for pick up times.

Is there a 30 minutes window of your pick-up time? Review standards with Transdev.

Ride duration: single trip so don't need to address this.

18. Can you specify a pickup time in advance, or do you call when ready to travel? How soon after your call will the vendor be expected to pick up? How do you ensure equity between pick up times for ambulatory riders and those who need WAVs?

Response: Can you specify a pickup time in advance, or do you call when ready to travel? – we want to encourage people to call in advance, but there is also a need to call when ready to travel. Example: same day medical appointment

Vendor should provide expected arrival time at your pick up spot and at your drop off destination.

How soon after your call will the vendor be expected to pick up? (referring to the phone?)

Response: need to clarify the question If it's referring to the phone, someone should answer with a wait time of no more than 2 minutes and arrival should be within 30 minutes

How do you ensure equity between pick up times for ambulatory riders and those who need WAVs? have a "no strand" policy?

Response: Have enough vehicles to ensure equity and monitor performance with clear expectations and consequences in the contract.

19. Will the program have a no-strand policy?

Response: Yes, the program will have a no-strand policy.

** Keep in mind that the program must have at least two providers in order to qualify for the "taxi exception" for drug testing. Funds allocated for the program must cover cost of transportation as well as administrative costs.