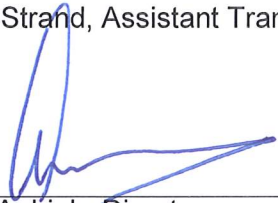


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| MEETING DATE: May 7, 2018 | | ITEM # 4 | |
| SUBJECT: UPDATE ON THE PILOT ON-DEMAND RIDESHARE SERVICE | | | |
| INITIATED OR REQUESTED BY: <input type="checkbox"/> Commission <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Other | | REPORT COORDINATED OR PREPARED BY: Sarah Strand, Assistant Transportation Planner  _____ Denix Anbiah, Director Public Works Department | |
| ATTACHMENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information | <input type="checkbox"/> Direction | <input type="checkbox"/> Action |

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this report is to provide the Transportation, Mobility and Infrastructure (TMI) Commission an update on West Sacramento On-Demand Rideshare Pilot.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Staff respectfully recommends that the TMI Commission receive the provided informational update on the Pilot On-Demand Rideshare service.

BACKGROUND

The Pilot On-Demand Rideshare service is an innovative public transportation model being tested by the City as an early action item of the broader Mobility Action Plan (MAP). On January 17, 2018, the City Council elected to award a contract to Nomad Transit LLC, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Via Transportation Inc., to assist with the planning, marketing, launch, operation, maintenance and performance evaluation of the service.

The Pilot will operate citywide for one (1) full year using a fleet of dedicated, co-branded Mercedes Benz Metris vans to provide on-demand share rides anywhere in the City for a flat fare. Ongoing performance monitoring and data collection will be leveraged to inform broader transportation planning considerations, including opportunities to optimize fixed route bus service and increase mobility for underserved communities. Throughout the life of the Pilot service, service parameters such as fares, hours of operation, or service area may be modified to better meet demands.

On January 17th, City Council directed staff to return monthly with project updates, including proposed service modifications, data on service performance and ridership, as well as higher-level policy considerations to ensure ample opportunity for Council members to provide input on the project. At the end of the one (1) year Pilot term, a final performance evaluation report will be compiled by the UC Berkeley Transportation Sustainability Research Center and will be presented for Council's consideration. City Council may elect to continue the service, contingent on performance and cost to sustain the program. As such, staff will provide ongoing project updates and opportunities for feedback at regularly scheduled TMI meetings, as well.

On March 5th, staff presented to the TMI Commission in advance of a City Council workshop to solicit feedback on key features of the service. Key feedback recorded by staff and conveyed to the City Council on the Pilot project included:

- Community partnerships could include promotions and outreach with Raley Field, Chambers of Commerce, BBCAN, River City High School, and State workers.
- Monitor demand and customer service to consider expanding Late-Night Service, Special Events Service, and/or consider expanding to one or more drop-off points in Downtown Sacramento during the Pilot to accommodate demand outside the City of West Sacramento.
- Option 2 "Bridge" branding was preferred by Commissioners that commented on the design, but expressed that the redundancy of two bridges in both the City logo and the large Bridge graphic should be avoided. As a result, the city logo "bridge" was removed, limiting the graphic in Option 2 to the larger "bridge" over the side-rear of the vehicle for City Council's consideration on March 21st.
 - Ensure that vehicle design conveys the message that the Pilot is a City endorsed and funded program.
- Continue exploring opportunities to link multi-modal trips (i.e. - add bike racks, partner with Bike Share).

- Make sure to do ample outreach to older adult community and consider translating materials to other languages (including Russian and Spanish) where feasible.

On March 21st, City Council approved the suite of service parameters proposed by staff for the launch of service on May 14, 2018. Since then, staff has been working closely with Via to take the steps necessary to deploy the service. The analysis below addresses action taken relating to TMI Commissioner feedback provided on March 5th, as well as work completed to date on the Pilot On-Demand Rideshare service.

ANALYSIS

Per Commissioner feedback, staff has taken the following actions to address their comments:

- Staff initiated contact with most community partners recommended by TMI Commissioners, including Raley Field, the Chambers of Commerce, BBCAN, and major employers. Staff is currently coordinating internally on the most appropriate approach to marketing to youth riders, given additional community concerns related to safety and security.
- Staff will continue to work closely with the Via team to monitor user feedback and report back on trends if demand becomes apparent for expanded service.
- Despite stated preference from the TMI Commission, the "Bridge" branding option for the vehicles was not recommended to City Council by staff because it would need to eliminate the Tower Bridge graphic from the City's logo to avoid redundancy (as pointed out by the TMI Commissioners) which resulted in the service appearing less official. Following internal consultation with other City departments, Staff ultimately recommended the Golden "Swoosh" branding design, which was approved by City Council.
 - There was consensus among staff that the recommended design is eye-catching, yet retains the official City logo signaling to users that the service is a public transportation option supported by City funds, which was also emphasized as an important message by the TMI Commission.
- Staff is continuing to explore opportunities to encourage linked multi-modal trips.
- A small group of key stakeholders were convened in April to discuss a Comprehensive Senior Outreach strategy, including representation from AARP and BBCAN to ensure that sufficient outreach is done with the older adult community. Materials will be translated, where feasible.

The Pilot is currently in Phase 1. This phase is focused on establishing the new service on the ground in West Sacramento, including the localization and customization of Via's proprietary technology allowing it to operate on the local roadway network. This phase also includes coordinated outreach to key businesses and stakeholders, driver acquisition, procurement of Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) services, vehicle delivery and branding, and preliminary development of a comprehensive marketing plan.

Significant progress has been made by the project team to prepare for the May 14th Launch event. Attachment 1 provides an updated overview of the 2018 Council & Commission schedule for West Sacramento's Via On-Demand Rideshare Pilot, including key meetings and reporting milestones. This schedule is subject to minor deviations and/or additional direction from the City Council. Staff will continue returning regularly to provide project updates and allow for additional opportunities to workshop potential policy implications of the service in greater depths as data from the operational Pilot service is available.

Recruitment of Drivers & Local Field Manager

In mid-April, a driver recruitment webpage and job-listings were posted by Via. Driver recruitment, selection and on-boarding continued through the month of April and into early May. Per state regulations and as contractually bound, background checks and screenings are conducted for all driver partners. In addition, the Via team hired a full-time Local Field Manager to manage the drivers and day-to-day operations of West Sacramento's service. The project team met with the California Fuel Cell Partnership on April 27, 2018, to discuss an agreement to store the Metris fleet in their secure facility at 3300 Industrial Boulevard for a nominal fee. The parking facility has an existing automatic gate entrance, lighting, ample parking capacity, and a security camera. An additional benefit is high-visibility of the parked vehicles from Highway 80, which will support marketing efforts. The agreement would also provide office space for Via's full-time Local Field Manager.

Fleet Vehicles & Wheelchair Accessible Service

The Metris fleet was delivered the week of April 23rd and began getting wrapped with the approved co-branding the same week. The vehicles were also outfitted with all necessary software and hardware required for drivers to operate on the Via platform. Staff coordinated with Via to help inform the technology localization & back-end systems setup by reviewing and providing feedback on neighborhood zones that will be utilized for reporting on the technology platform. The zones will be adapted as demand is collected and will be used to disaggregate demand data into more granular sections of the City and will inform supply-side decision made by the Via team

as demand patterns emerge over time. The Via team will be conducting field tests with the vans through early May up to the day of launch.

Under the terms of this contract, Via was committed to developing a solution to accommodate people in wheelchairs. Although a subcontract with Yellow Cab had been presented as a likely option early on, staff strongly advocated for the Via team to explore the feasibility of retrofitting one of the Metris vans, instead. As a result, the Via team was able to promote the concept to their strategic partner, Mercedes Benz, who agreed to retrofit one of the donated Metris vans to be wheelchair accessible. This means that WAV users will now receive a similar experience when catching a ride on the Via/West Sac On-Demand platform as other users. The retrofitted WAV Metris will be delivered at the beginning of June. Staff will be closely monitoring the demand for WAV rides and will provide reports on usage data to the TMI Commission post-launch.

Lastly, Via submitted an application to the Electrify America program requesting funds to purchase additional electric vehicles to deploy as part of the West Sacramento On-Demand fleet. As of the end of April, an announcement has not been made regarding funding awards.

Marketing, Outreach & Events

A draft marketing plan was developed by Via outlining a broad framework for the types of outreach proposed for the pre- and post-launch phases. Staff is working on developing a more comprehensive marketing plan that will include targeted outreach to the business community and major employers, a robust online and social media presence, and hands-on education and encouragement events with the senior community. A suite of marketing collateral is being developed collaboratively to create a "toolkit" of messaging and graphics that can be shared with businesses and other local agencies or organizations who are able to help spread the word on the service to their communities (i.e. CalSTRS, Chamber, BBCAN, etc.). Promotional flyers, how-to videos, FAQs, and other ad-based marketing will be more heavily deployed after the service is launched so that potential users are able to download and try the service out immediately after hearing about it. Webpages will be available on both the City's and Via's website by the time the service is launched.

Staff began coordinating with the Economic Development Team to identify major employers for outreach. In addition, the Chamber of Commerce has requested that staff present on the service at one of their monthly luncheons. The December edition of the Chamber's magazine will be focused on Transportation, and will likely feature the new service, as well. Early conversations with Raley Field, who was considered a prime promotional opportunity, have revealed that Lyft already has an exclusive sponsorship deal precluding the City's Via On-Demand service from being promoted at the stadium. However, a Raley Field representative stated that other partnership opportunities may still exist, which staff will further explore.

Separately, a small group of stakeholders was convened to discuss a Senior Outreach Strategy, including staff from the City Manager's Office and representatives from BBCAN and AARP. AARP will be sending information about the service out to all West Sacramento members by email, and will also promote the service on their Facebook page. BBCAN will be helping staff to raise awareness and educate community members about how to use the service, as well.

Staff has continued ongoing coordination with YCTD to develop a promotions strategy that encourages user of the new Pilot service to transfer to Yolobus when it makes sense. A limited number of vouchers providing a free bus ride will be available to anyone who takes a ride on the Via/West Sac On-Demand service. In addition, staff has been coordinating with YCTD to identify advertisement space at various bus stop locations. Ads of various sizes will be located at bus stops throughout the City, as well as at the Transit Center. Staff will continue to coordinate with Yolobus to track impacts of the voucher program and consider additional partnership opportunities.

Staff also attended multiple events to begin spreading the word about the Pilot service, including Earth Day (April 21st), the State of the City Address (May 3rd), and the Senior Resource Fair (May 4th). Staff will continue to leverage existing events over the next year as opportunities to promote the new service.

Launch Event

A major press event will be held at 10:00 a.m. on Monday, May 14th, at the corner of Riverfront Street and Ballpark Drive, to kick-off West Sacramento's Via On-Demand rideshare service. Mayor Cabaldon will speak along with project partners from Via and SACOG (to be confirmed). Demonstration rides will be available in the new Metris fleet along Riverfront Street. Along with major news outlets, the City Council, Commissioners, and partners from around the region are invited to celebrate the debut of the City's new public transportation service, including YCTD, UC Berkeley, BBCAN, AARP, Los Rios Community College, Chamber of Commerce, and others.

At launch, rides will be available citywide for \$3.50 a seat, but with slightly limited hours, operating Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. to start. The service is not proposed to operate on Sundays and Holidays at this time. Based on experience in other cities, the Via team hypothesizes that demand will be greatest during weekday commuting hours, but will retain the flexibility to modify hours of operation to be highly demand responsive. By late June, the project team anticipates expanding service hours to Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., and Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. However, these may be modified based on actual demand and user feedback during the first month or two of service, or to accommodate additional City direction.

Challenges/Barriers

Mercedes Benz informed the Via team that the delivery of the WAV retro-fitted Metris van will be delayed until June 1, 2018. This means that wheelchair accessible rides will not be available for approximately the first two (2) weeks of service. Staff met with key advocates for senior and mobility limited residents to discuss this minor set-back, including representatives from AARP and BBCAN to consider whether an interim WAV solution would be required during the 2 week delay. Potential solutions that were considered included pursuing a subcontract with Yellow Cab to provide subsidized rides at the same price as the Pilot service, or to try and locate an acceptable vehicle available for a short term rental. However, due to concerns about the time and complexity involved with executing a subcontract, and insurance and liability issues with using a rented vehicle to provide a service, a consensus decision was reached to not provide WAV rides until the retrofitted Metris arrives. Senior advocates advised staff to clearly communicate this delay in marketing and outreach. Additional outreach will be done to announce the availability of WAV rides when the vehicle arrives in June.

Overview of Ridership Data, Trends & Customer Feedback

Not applicable at this time.

Proposed/Implemented Service Modifications

Not applicable at this time.

Environmental Considerations

On January 17, 2018, the City Council approved a Categorical Exemption for this project under Class 6, Guidelines Section 15306 (Information Collection) of CEQA since the Pilot will focus on data collection, research and evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource and will inform the City's consideration of approving and funding the service for additional years. A Notice of Exemption has been submitted to the County Clerk's Office.

Strategic Plan Integration

This project advances the Strategic Plan Management Agenda item, "Mobility Action Plan."

Alternatives

- 1) Accept this informational item about the Pilot On-Demand Rideshare service.
- 2) Elect not to accept this informational item at this time and postpone to a subsequent meeting.

Coordination and Review

This report was prepared by the Traffic and Transportation Division of the Public Works Department in coordination with the Via Transportation, Inc. project team. Marketing and outreach strategies have been developed in coordination with the Communications and Media Division of the City Manager's Office.

Budget/Cost Impact

This project has an approved budget of \$749,000 funded by a \$149,999 SACOG TDM Innovation Grant and a Council allocation of \$599,001 from using local Transportation Development Act (TDA) funds [a combination of State Transit Assistance (STA) and Local Transportation Funds (LTF)]. No additional budget impact is associated with this informational update.

ATTACHMENT(S)

- 1) Updated 2018 Council & Commission Schedule Overview – On-Demand Rideshare Pilot

