



## Specialized Transportation Workshop

*Workshop facilitated by: Zachary Rivera and Benjamin Gembler*

February 24, 2022: 2-4:30 p.m.

### Workshop Summary

#### # Item

#### 1. Welcome, Introductions, and Housekeeping

Staff kicked-off the workshop, invited participants to introduce themselves, and provided housekeeping instructions.

#### 2. Preparation for Upcoming SANDAG Calls for Projects Related to Specialized Transportation

Staff provided an overview of the outreach efforts conducted to-date to prepare the upcoming calls for projects. Staff highlighted recent feedback received as well as input from the 2020 Coordinated Plan and the past two Specialized Transportation Grant Program Calls for Projects.

#### 3. Facilitated Group Discussion

Staff led a discussion to solicit feedback on the vision for specialized transportation in the region, the most significant barriers to mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities, and the most pressing operational challenges in providing specialized transportation services. Below is a summary of the feedback received during this item.

Question 1: What does the future of specialized transportation look like, and what would "success" look like?"

- The future of specialized transportation could include a centralized "marketplace" of specialized transportation providers that can dynamically share information, track ride requests, and leverage resources
- Success would be when anyone who needs a ride can get one
- Success would entail ensuring anyone who needs specialized transportation services is aware of existing services and the region is aware of the value of specialized transportation services
- Success would be when all forms of public transit are capable of meeting specialized transit needs
- Success would mean that those that need specialized transportation services would have the same level of access as those that do not need specialized transportation services



Question 2: How can the region leverage technology and encourage coordination to bring out this vision?

- Make sure website and programs are accessible for people with disabilities, including people who are blind
- Implement a software program used by specialized transportation providers in the region to create a centralized marketplace for scheduling, tracking, and providing rides
- Leverage 2-1-1's Community Information Exchange and promote enhanced communication and coordination among providers
- Invest in digital literacy in technology for people with disabilities and seniors
- Provide better training to ensure those who need specialized transportation services are aware of and know how to use existing services

Question 3: Do you foresee an increase in on-demand specialized transportation services, and increased coordination with Transportation Network Companies such as Uber and Lyft to realize this vision?

- There will be an increased demand for on-demand specialized transportation services, though increased coordination with Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) is not the solution
- There should be incentives for providers to partner with TNCs
- TNCs do not have sufficient accessible vehicles, and even if they did, their drivers need enhanced training in interacting with seniors and individuals with disabilities
- The TNC model is not well-suited to the needs of the specialized transportation population
- TNCs do not serve certain areas of the region, including parts of the urbanized area.

Question 4: What do you see as the most significant barriers for seniors and individuals with disabilities to receive specialized transportation services?

- Cost: The cost of specialized transportation services is expensive and increasing, putting burdens on providers and riders
- Funding: Funding for specialized transportation services has not kept pace with the increased number of seniors who need such services
- Trust: Providers need to build relationships and trust with seniors and disabled riders, especially with those that may have sensitive doctor's appointments or need door-to-door assistance.
- Awareness: Those that may need specialized transportation services are often unaware of existing specialized transportation services
- Availability: Rural or small urban areas often lack sufficient or appropriate specialized transportation services, such as door-to-door transportation or taxi services



Question 5: What are the most significant operational challenges currently for providers to deliver specialized transportation services?

- Increasing vehicle costs, including vehicle maintenance
- A shortage of volunteer and other drivers resulting from COVID-19
- Rider reluctance to return to specialized transportation services due to safety concerns following COVID-19
- Driver concerns for safety given some seniors cannot get vaccinated due to medical concerns
- A lack of wheelchair accessible vehicles

Question 6: How can specialized transportation in the region rebound from COVID-19?

- Publicize research showing that public and specialized transportation services are safe
- Increase coordination among providers to leverage resources
- Restore service to areas where paratransit has been cut

#### 4. Break

#### 5. Break-Out Discussions

Staff facilitated two break-out discussions on the Specialized Transportation Grant Program (STGP) and Access for All Grant Program (AFA). Topics for each grant program included program goal(s) and objectives, eligibility and evaluation criteria, and performance measures. Below is a summary of feedback received for each break-out discussion.

##### A. Specialized Transportation Grant Program

###### Program Goal and Objectives

- Clarify what “incentives for coordination” means
- Include safety in the program objectives
- Add timeliness when discussing efficiency
- Revisit the objective to fund innovative and flexible programs since existing programs may already be as innovative and flexible as possible over years honing best practices
- Consider small urbanized and semi-rural areas when determining cost per trip standards since areas such as Fallbrook are not the same as downtown San Diego
- Recognize that there is inherent conflict between encouraging coordination among providers and holding a competitive grant program
- Change the proposed equity and environmental responsibility criteria due to concerns that these would be held against applicants given clientele focus
- Recognize that there is inherent conflict between encouraging environmentally responsible vehicles and cost-efficiency



#### Evaluation Criteria

- Consider structuring the evaluation criteria such that proposed projects score bonus points if they are deemed innovative and environmentally responsible but are not penalized if they are not.

#### Performance Measures

- Clarify how equity would be measured (e.g., by clients, by project service area) and specify how region-wide programs would be impacted
- Address concern that provider without a need to provide language assistance would be marked down for not providing language assistance
- Increase the weight given to effectiveness, and reduce the weights given to equity, environmental responsibility, and coordination

### B. Access for All Grant Program

#### Eligible Projects and Costs

- Explore whether items that have already been purchased such as routing software can be reimbursed through the AFA after SANDAG receives AFA grant funding
- Clarify if there would be criteria on the number of trips that are expected to be provided within the funding limitations
- Clarify how often SANDAG expects to receive grant funding from the California Public Utilities Commission.

#### Program Goal and Objectives

- Make Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) trip times funded through the AFA equivalent to those provided by existing Transportation Network Companies
- Tailor goals and objectives to WAVs specifically rather than replicating Section 5310 goals and objectives since the AFA is designed to meet a need for WAV trips not met currently through the Section 5310 Program.

#### Evaluation Criteria

- Encourage and clearly define cost-efficiency
- Include access and equity
- Start with a targeted and small-scale launch to determine demand given the newness of the program

#### Defining "on-demand"

- Explore reducing the 24-hour threshold established by the California Public Utilities Commission for "on-demand" services to match the spirit of the grant program and help in emergency situations

## 6. Reporting Back from Break-out Discussions

Staff facilitators, with the help of workshop participants, reported on major ideas heard during the break-out discussions.

## 7. Next Steps and Timeline



Staff provided an overview of the timeline for the STGP and AFA Calls for Projects, including opportunities to review comments received during the workshop and provide further input. Staff provided a survey for participants to complete to gauge how well the workshop did in allowing participants to provide meaningful input. The AFA Cycle 1 Call for Projects is anticipated to be released in late March 2022 and the STGP Cycle 12 Call for Projects is anticipated to be released in early July 2022.

## 8. Adjournment