Link Transit’s Strategy Regarding Human Services Transportation

Washington State Transportation Commission June 16th, 2021
Setting the Stage

- 2002 – Link Transit
  18% budget deficit
  paratransit consuming 49% of budget
  fixed route shrinking (down 63%)
  entire full sized fleet over useful life
- A new paradigm was necessary
Old View of Paratransit Demand

• Paratransit is a premium service
• Demand unlimited unless controlled
• Demand control was necessary
  – Eligibility
  – Service Quality
  – Service Design
  – Fares
Most Peoples View of Paratransit
Typical paratransit attributes

• No Spontaneity – next day to two week advance reservations
• Negotiating (+/- 60 minutes) pick-up times
• Large on-time windows (+/- 30 minutes)
• Convoluted routes, long ride times
• Limited predictability
• Uncomfortable vehicles
The New Paradigm

• When paratransit is good, it is still “bad”
• Consider our riders real alternatives?
• If routed service really meets their needs, they will voluntarily choose it.
• If routed services are not appropriate, we should make other community resources available.
What Did We Do?

- Acquired low-floor buses (first in State)
- Eliminated transfers to Senior meals
- Made fixed route free for paratransit eligible
- Invested in focused travel training
- Communicated message of independence
- Increased frequency of buses serving major destinations of paratransit riders
Fixed Route vs Paratransit (x 10)
(Paratransit adjusted to show relationship)
Percent of Link Budget for Paratransit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>45.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
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<td>2009</td>
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<td>2011</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
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Travel Training

• Most individuals don’t use transit
• When become disabled, want paratransit
• With travel training, most can use transit for regular trips
• Each individual travel trained, saves $40 per trip or $7,680 annually for an average paratransit user
Human Services Gaps

• ADA Paratransit is required to be provided to all origins and destinations within ¾ of mile of our fixed routes during the hours and days of service.
• Taxing district is 3,500 square miles.
• ¾ mile corridor around routes is about 450 square miles.
• A lot of people with special needs live outside the ADA boundaries but within the taxing district
Volunteer Driver Program

• Link contracts w/ Community Organizations
• Individuals apply for eligibility
• Issued mileage vouchers based on distance to nearest frequent fixed route
• Eligible users will find their own driver and “pay” driver with the mileage vouchers.
Volunteer Driver (cont.)

- Vouchers will initially be distributed at a rate of 4 round trips per month.
- Annual budget is estimated to not exceed $150,000.
- The volunteer drivers can be reimbursed at IRS rate ($0.52 per mile).