

SamTrans OnDemand Mid-Year Evaluation

SamTrans Board of Directors
November 6, 2019

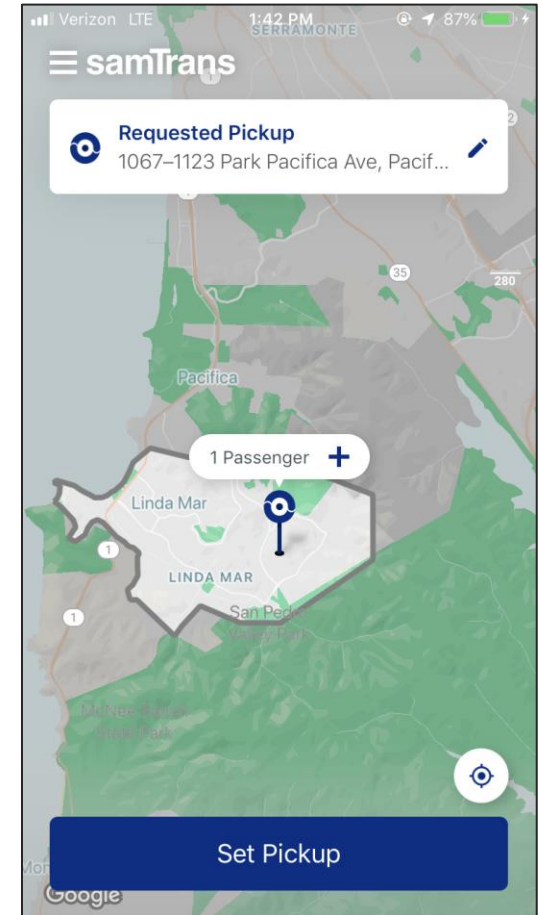
Agenda

- Overview of Pilot
- Evaluation Criteria
- Evaluation Results
- Proposed Recommendation & Next Steps
- Discussion and Questions



SamTrans OnDemand Overview

- Converted the FLX Pacifica in May 2019
 - Hours of service and fare remained
 - Mon-Friday; 6:15a-6:30p
 - Local fare applies
 - Trip requests via SamTrans OnDemand app or the Customer Service Center



Why Pacifica?

- Can determine if **microtransit** works in **traditionally challenging areas** for fixed routes (low densities & remote geography)
 - Addresses requests for service from Coastside
- Test **technology**
 - How does on-demand feel operationally
 - What is the best application of this technology
- Allows for **before and after comparisons** of
 - Rider behavior
 - Public reception of microtransit compared to fixed route
- Utilize **existing contract** for FLX Pacifica
 - FLX Pacifica operated with smaller vehicle, so no new capital equipment needed
 - Flexible start date, ability to add resources if needed; scalable



Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation Criteria

- **Performance:** Perspective from the numbers
 - Rider retention, ridership, trip requests, productivity, account conversion
- **Operations:** Experience in the field
 - Ease of use of driver app, training, data
- **Customer Experience:** Public reaction
 - Pre/post customer survey, complaints
- **Technology:** Working with new technology
 - Troubleshooting, app updates, technology support

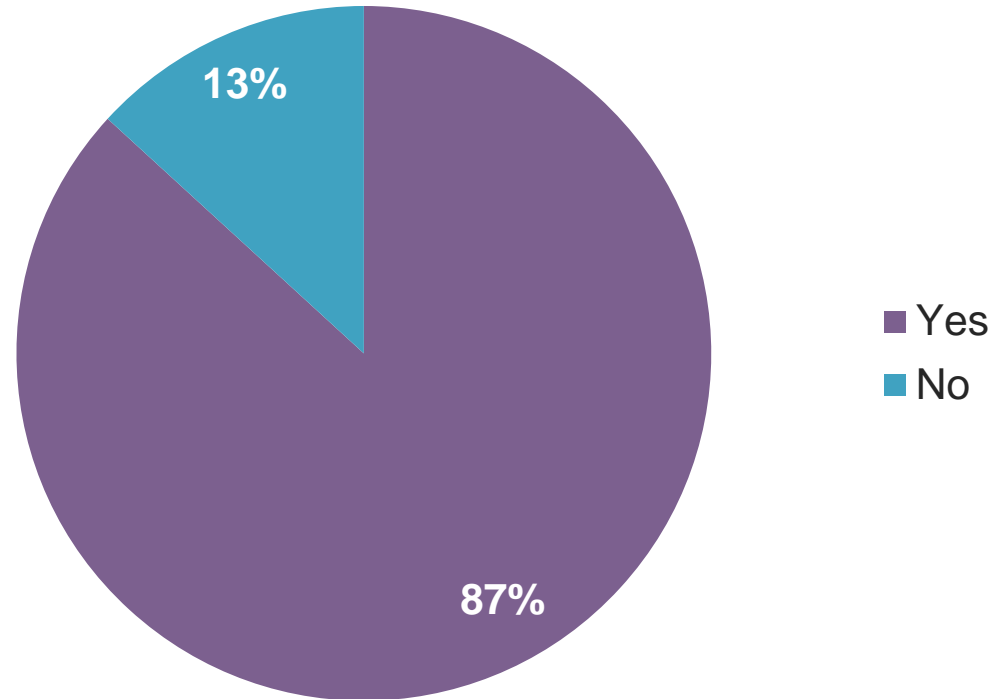
Evaluation Summary

- 1. Ridership levels are slightly lower than FLX Pacifica.**
 - There is room to grow ridership
- 2. Customer experience is positive.**
 - OnDemand riders are former FLX Pacifica riders, and most of them like it better.
 - Complaints mostly surround the inability to book trips when there is high demand.
- 3. Microtransit may not be a good solution for large groups of student riders.**
 - Challenges with the algorithm when many people try to use the service from the same place at the same time.
- 4. One vehicle has its limitations but the algorithm has room to improve**
 - Most challenges have to do with supply messages/reliability due to how the algorithm was initially calibrated and operator breaks (7% of trip requests)
- 5. Internally things have been smooth, but there are some systemic challenges to address if expansion is desired.**

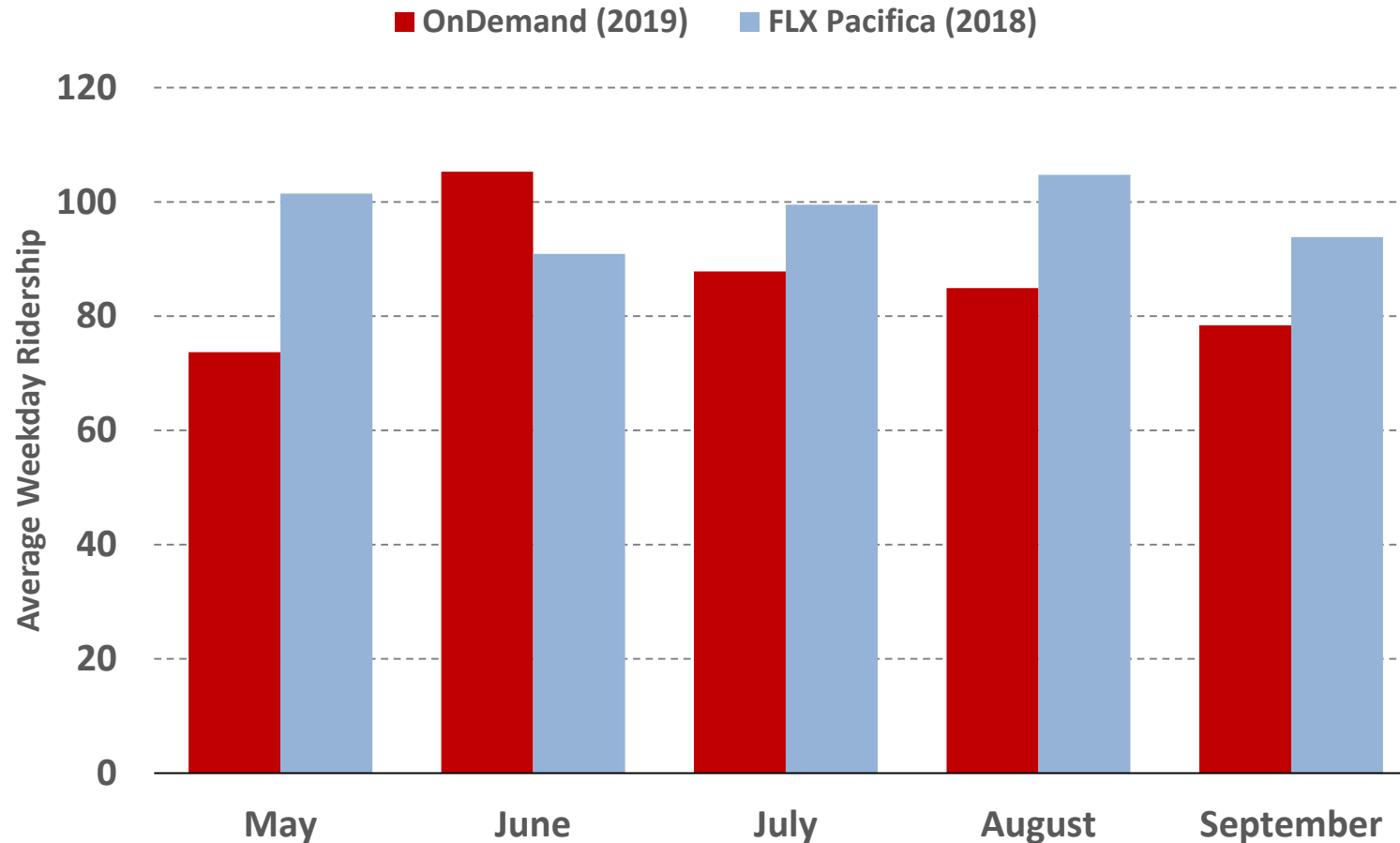
Performance Criteria

Performance – FLXP Rider Retention

Did you ride the FLX Pacifica before May 5, 2019?

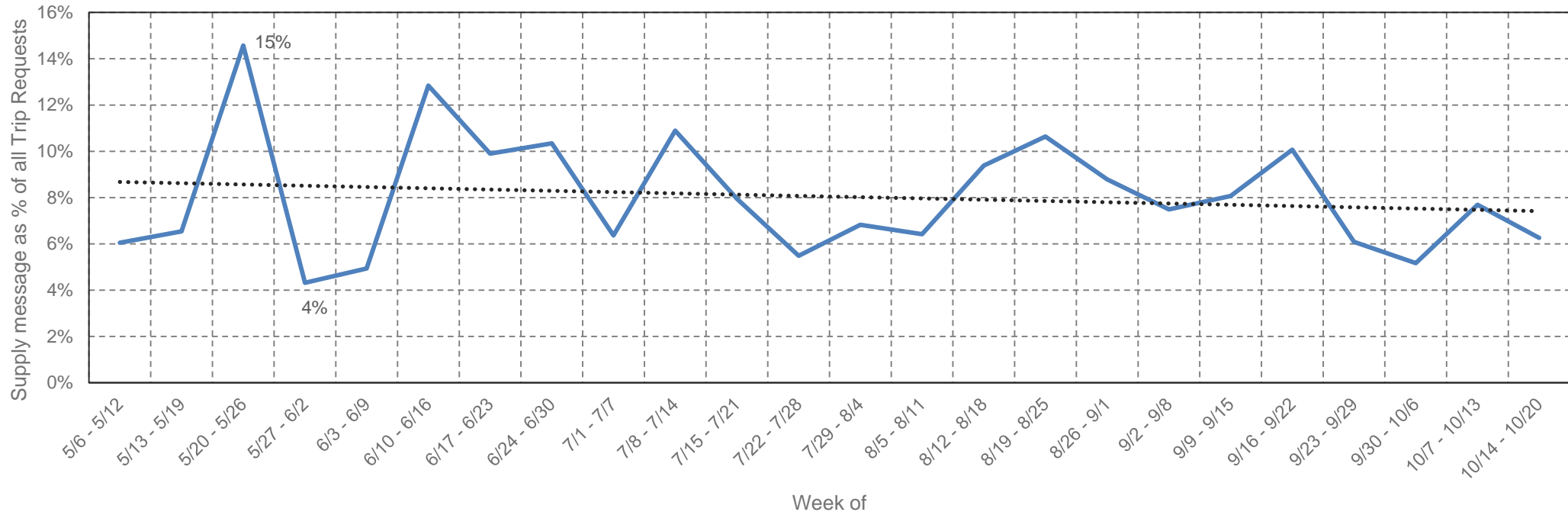


Performance – Average Weekday Ridership



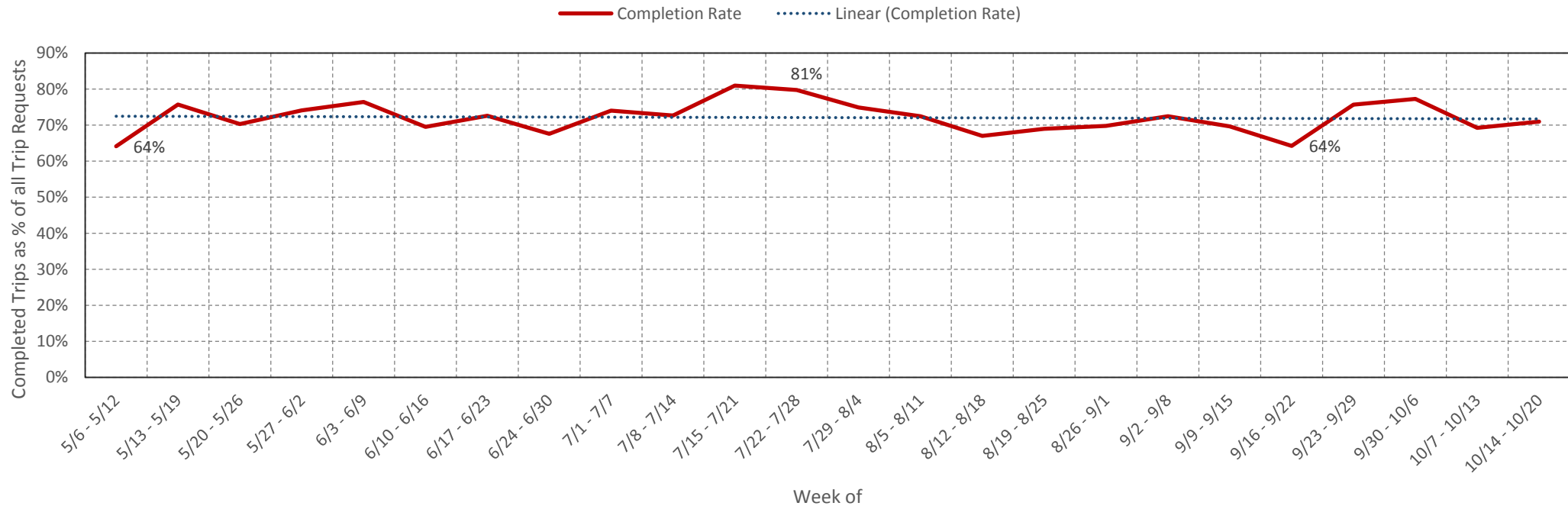
- **Fewer** average weekday **passengers** than **FLX Pacifica**.
- **There is room to grow** the OnDemand ridership **if the seat unavailable messages** can be fully reduced.

Performance – Supply Message



- 7% of trip requests receive a **seat unavailable message**. Staff are working with Via to **monitor and adjust algorithm parameters to reduce the seat unavailable message**.
- Staff is digging into the message rate to better understand what influences it, how it varies by hour of day, and determine what adjustments can be made.

Performance – Completion Rate

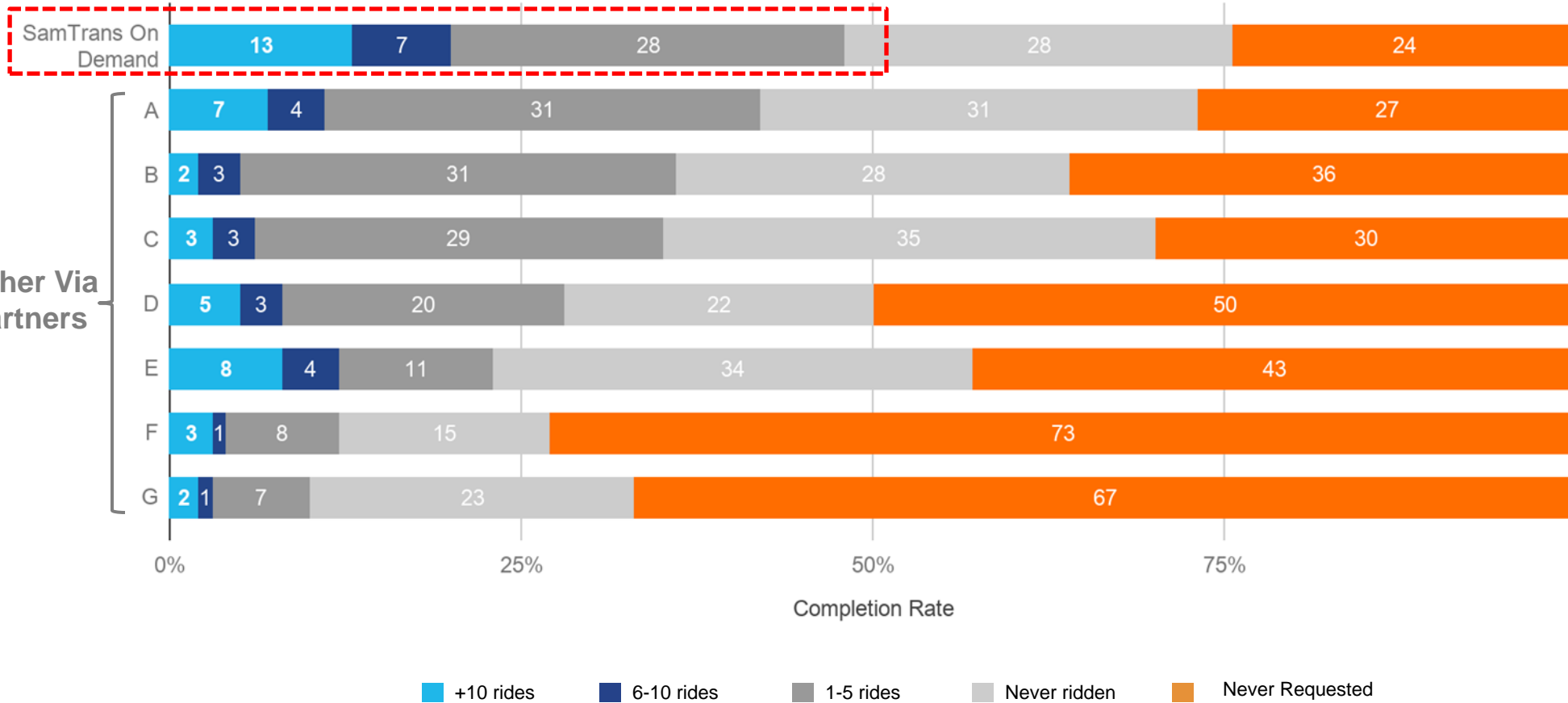


- On average, **70%** of trip requests are being accommodated

Performance – Average ETA and OTP

- **Average ETA** is approximately 12 minutes.
 - Algorithm sets the maximum ETA at 35 minutes
 - Additional adjustments to this parameter may improve service reliability
- **OTP is consistent**; rarely is the service more than $\frac{1}{2}$ minute late.
- The Via algorithm **accurately predicts arrival time** for riders.

Performance – Account Conversion



- OnDemand has **best account conversion** among Via's other partners
- **Approx. 50% of accounts took a ride**
- Account conversion is strong and there is a **strong ridership base of frequent users**

Operations Criteria

Operations

Driver training/feedback

- Using the app is easy
- Incorporating the “Human Touch” very important
- Ongoing driver/admin training on updates is necessary
- Driver break causes service to be unavailable

Internally

- Requires 360 degrees of technology support
- Data reconciliation challenges

Operations – Ridership Data

- Operators follow procedures and record all rides taken using the appropriate buttons on the farebox; additionally operators press a button on the Via tablet to indicate a passenger has been picked up and dropped off.
- There are periodic discrepancies between farebox (GFI) data and data received through the Via reports.
- **Data reconciliation** processes may be necessary to **ensure all rides are counted** when discrepancies arise in the data.

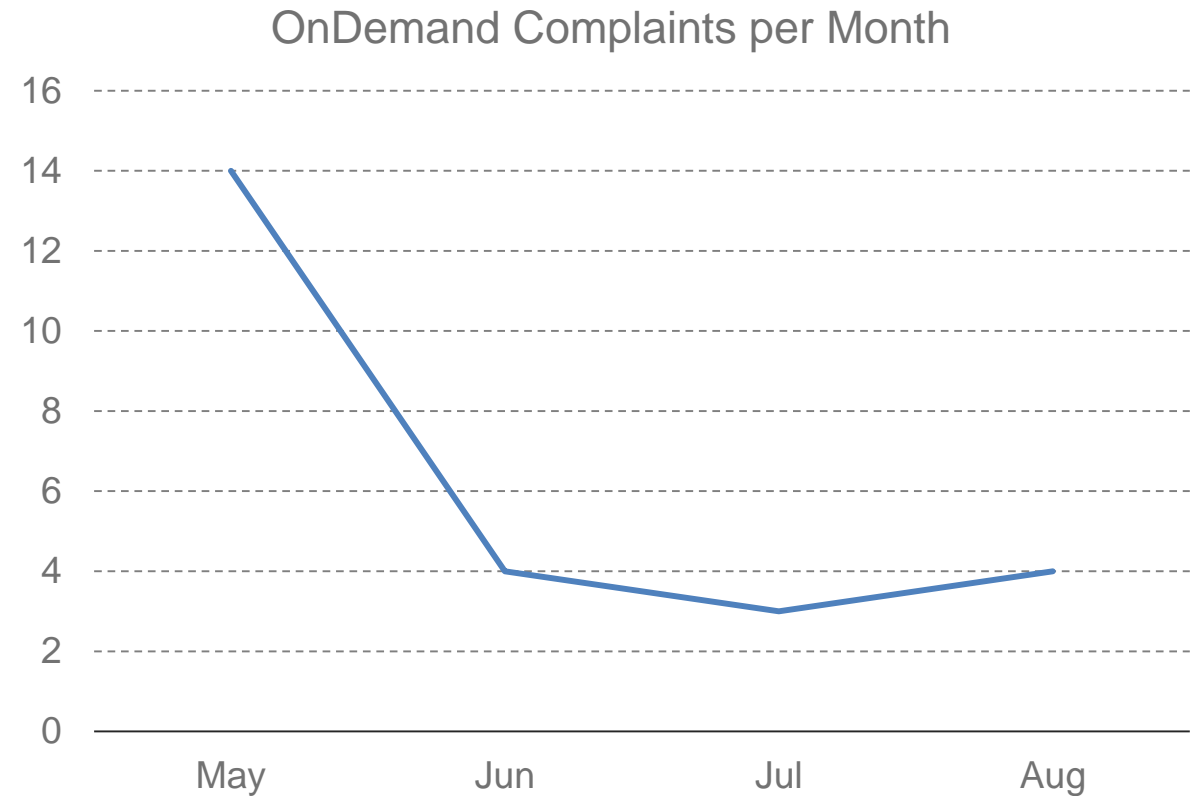
Operations – Terra Nova High School

- Early release two Wednesdays per month; fixed-route school service not available
- Second OnDemand vehicle posted at Terra Nova
- Peak of trip requests from students creates confusion
 - Algorithm cannot handle the load of trip requests easily
 - Most students going to the same place (Linda Mar P&R)
 - MV Dispatcher manually assign other trips
- **Conclusions**
 - Microtransit may not be a good solution for large groups of student riders

Customer Experience

Customer Experience – CSC Complaints

- Number of complaints was highest during the first month of launch; have been down since
- Most complaints about supply message, reliability concerns



Customer Experience – Complaints and Feedback

- The number of complaints for OnDemand is higher than FLX Pacifica
 - Largely due to the seat unavailable message
 - Dispatch communicates with the call center during driver breaks
- Compared to FLX Pacifica
 - **Frequent** (5+ days/week) rider base relatively stable;
 - **63%** of respondents thought that **OnDemand was better** than FLX Pacifica.

Customer Experience

- **Early phone-based trip requests before 7 AM**
 - Accommodate walk-ons, or call MV dispatch, before call center opened
- **Positive CSR feedback** on ride-booking process
 - Two step authentication process to create riders accounts a challenge
- **Phone based** trip requests: **~29% of total**
- **Initial Conclusion:** Heavy use of call-in number.
 - Expansion of service area would require us to evaluate the need and logistics to opening the call center earlier to accommodate potential riders, or consider turnkey model.
 - Future OnDemand outreach will push non-app users towards app.

Technology

Technology

- **External**

- Responsive technology support is important
- Robust ongoing training and technical assistance

- **Internal**

- Ensuring sufficient technical resources are available if this type of service delivery is to be continued

- **Initial Conclusion:** Committed technology partner important. Internal resources need to be developed to ensure 360 degrees of tech support; consider turnkey model for expansion.

Recommendation & Next Steps

- **Continue to monitor ridership for another quarter**
 - Monitor seat unavailable message
 - Continue to make modifications to algorithm
 - Continue marketing and outreach activities
- **Next steps**
 - Return with final recommendation by February 2020
 - Reimagine SamTrans will look for opportunities for OnDemand to provide coverage
 - Will consider during the alternatives development

Discussion