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?

- Yes: 87%
- No: 13%
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 ½ 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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Via Partners</th>
<th>SamTrans On Demand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>7 4 7 28 28 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>2 3 31 28 36 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>3 3 29 35 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>5 3 20 22 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>8 4 11 34 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>3 1 8 15 73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>2 1 7 23 67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Completion Rate**
- **+10 rides**
- **6-10 rides**
- **1-5 rides**
- **Never ridden**
- **Never Requested**
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