

Appendix E: Paratransit Progress

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC)'s Transit Sustainability Project established a "framework and implementation plan for a more robust, financially viable transit system that is both cost-effective and customer-focused." The ADA Paratransit component of the project ("the Paratransit Report") identified six regional priority strategies "based on their potential to manage costs, impacts on riders' mobility, the number of operators that could apply them, and ease of implementation," four of which are implementable by paratransit operators.

This section discusses the progress that SamTrans has made towards implementation of these four priority strategies, plus a few additional strategies, from MTC's Transit Sustainability Project Paratransit Report. The following strategy descriptions are taken directly from the MTC Report. Below each strategy is a description of progress as of March 2018.

Travel Training and Promotion to Seniors: Expanding travel training would increase mobility and help reduce growth of ADA paratransit demand. Ideally, training and outreach can be conducted before individuals apply for paratransit, for example with older adults who may need to curtail driving in the near future.

Progress: SamTrans provides free professional travel training through contracts with three specialized training service providers. Travel training is conducted one-on-one to teach paratransit customers to use SamTrans and Caltrain, and to transfer to other systems. Additionally, SamTrans operates a Mobility Ambassador program and a Veterans volunteer program that provides free group training and one-on-one training for older adults and veterans.

Enhanced ADA Paratransit Certification Process: Depending on the transit agency, available cost savings range from none to substantial. While a centralized regional process is not necessary, many transit agencies can enhance their processes. Some smaller agencies could combine this function for efficiency and to support staff with specialized skills.

Progress: SamTrans uses a paratransit eligibility contractor to conduct in-person eligibility evaluations with functional testing as needed.

Implementing Conditional Eligibility: Opportunities exist at several transit operators in combination with an enhanced eligibility process. Some operators already have an eligibility process that can support enforcement of conditional eligibility.

Progress: Conditional eligibility refers to paratransit eligibility for some trips, but not all, based on the condition that the customer has the ability to make some trips on fixed-route transit. SamTrans currently enforces conditional eligibility for customers based on a number of factors. SamTrans' paratransit eligibility contractor continues to gather additional information during eligibility screening on customer origins and destinations and conditions to attempt to increase the number of conditionally eligible customers. During FY 2017, 21% of applicants were given some type of conditional eligibility.

Premium Charges for Service Beyond ADA Requirements: One opportunity is establishing fares for special service to human service agencies that exceeds ADA requirements.

Progress: SamTrans currently charges higher fares for specialized service to adult day agencies, which requires a high level of individual service to patrons by operators. SamTrans currently provides paratransit service beyond the service hours and area required by the ADA.

In addition to the above progress made towards the priority strategies, SamTrans has implemented additional strategies identified in the Transit Sustainability Project Paratransit Report:

- **Fare Incentives to Use Fixed-Route Service** – Redi-Wheels/RediCoast customers can ride free on SamTrans fixed-route buses by showing their valid paratransit identification cards. Staff is working to update paratransit ID cards to include a magnetic strip which, when swiped boarding a bus, will provide SamTrans with valuable data about the extent of use of this program.
- **Controlling no-shows and late cancelations** – In an effort to reduce paratransit no-shows and late cancelations that increase operating costs,

SamTrans implemented a program that notifies customers when they no-show or cancel late, and works with them to change their behavior. The program has been successful in keeping no-shows at a low level.

- **Explore alternative service delivery model** – SamTrans will continue to consider the potential for reducing costs by transferring reservations, scheduling, and dispatching to a centralized call center. In addition, service delivery could be contracted to a number of independent operators.
- **Effective Use of Taxis** - Currently, taxis are used to supplement the paratransit vehicle fleet, which improves cost-effectiveness by using taxis during low-demand and peak-of-the-peak periods. Taxis provided 29% of paratransit trips in FY 2016.
- **Explore public-private partnerships** – SamTrans is evaluating the potential for partnerships with private transportation network companies (TNCs) to provide paratransit service. This effort will explore the legal, logistical, and policy issues associated with such a partnership.