Peer Exchange: Exploring New Institutional and Governance Models for Integrated Mobility (Washington, DC)

NCMM

National Center for Mobility Management

Federal Transit Administration

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About the National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM)

The National Center for Mobility Management is a national technical assistance center funded through a cooperative agreement with the Federal Transit Administration, and operated through a consortium of three national organizations—the American Public Transportation Association, the Community Transportation Association of America, and Easterseals Inc. The mission of the Center is to promote customer-centered mobility strategies that advance good health, economic vitality, self-sufficiency, and community.

Welcome and Introductions
- Rich Weaver, Co-Director, National Center for Mobility Management; and Director - Planning, Policy & Sustainability, American Public Transportation Association, Washington, DC

Overview of the US DOT Ladders of Opportunity Initiative
- Bruce Robinson, Associate Administrator, Office of Program Management, Federal Transit Administration, Washington, DC

Bruce Robinson discussed the Rides to Wellness Program and the [Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility](#) (CCAM) meeting held in July 2016. During the meeting on CCAM, there was a lot of energy from attendees about how to move forward and how to re-energize the CCAM. Participants at the meeting discussed what other opportunities for coordination exist and what challenges the transit industry faces in coordinating transportation services beyond the non-emergency medical transportation services.

The FTA office of Program Management also plans to issue FAQs on questions that it has received around eligibility requirements around the 5310 program. FTA also plans to provide guidance that would help agencies structure arrangements with TNCs that would include guidance on civil rights as well as drug and alcohol requirements.

Overview of Mobility on Demand Sandbox
- Vincent Valdes, Associate Administrator for Research, Demonstration and Innovation, Federal Transit Administration, Washington, DC

Vince Valdes gave an overview of the [Mobility on Demand Sandbox](#) Program. The MOD Sandbox was set up to observe and support agencies in this new space, figure out the right metrics, and understand the impact new partnerships are having on FTA requirements and regulations. The first MOD Sandbox cycle received 78 applications for $8 million. There may be additional cycles in the future. The program has $20 million in discretionary funding over the next five years because of the FAST Act.

The TRI Office is working with TransitCenter to develop a list of national-level metrics that can be used from agency to agency, from region to region, and translate across the country.

Questions and Answers from Participants

- Is there a timeline for when the industry can expect metrics that FTA is working on with TransitCenter on Mobility on Demand?
  - Hopefully, within the next six months. There will also be another listening session at TRB and part of the discussion will be those metrics.
- Do the forthcoming FAQs address data sharing issues and requirements, impact on NTD reporting, what qualifies it as transit trip versus what qualifies as a non-transit trip, etc.?
  - Not yet. What we're planning to do is put up the base level of FAQs, continue to take questions and update that list. FTA is aware that there are issues with getting data from some companies.
- Is the FTA going to require a certain data sharing requirement in our contractual arrangements with the ride sharing companies?

- The FTA is not going to put out guidance that says this is what you must include in your contracts. What we're going to put out is information about what makes something eligible or not and then it's up to you to determine whether if you want to use.

Panel Session: Examples from across the country on innovative partnership models for integrated mobility

Facilitator:
Judy Shanley, Co-Director, National Center for Mobility Management; and Assistant Vice President Education & Youth Transition, Easter Seals, Chicago, IL Chicago, IL (Invited)

Panelists:
- Gary Thomas, Chair, APTA Mobility Management Committee and President/Executive Director, Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), Dallas, TX
- Cassandra Ecker Borchers, AICP, Chief Development Officer, Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority, St. Petersburg, FL
- Rich Farr, Executive Director, rabbittransit, York, PA

Gary Thomas, Chair, APTA Mobility Management Committee and President/Executive Director, Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), Dallas, TX

DART began a partnership with Uber about a year ago as a marketing relationship on St. Patrick's Day. Customers could use the GoPass app to receive a discounted Uber ride if they used the TNC as a first-last mile connection to transit.

This initial partnership led to Uber and DART wanting to create a joint app that would plan a customer's trip from beginning to end regardless of the mode of transportation used. DART submitted an MOD Sandbox grant application to fund the idea and ultimately received an award.

Right now, the DART is taking their existing mobile ticketing app, GoPass, and working with their developer Unwire to coordinate rides with Uber and Lyft as well as Yellow Taxi and bikeshare companies. DART is also working to integrate their rural service providers into the app as well. There have been issues regarding data sharing and around Title VI that the agency and its new mobility partners are working through, and DART hopes to share more throughout the grant period.

Cassandra Ecker Borchers, AICP, Chief Development Officer, Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority, St. Petersburg, FL

Cassandra Borchers discussed the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority Direct Connect program. It began as a first-last mile partnership with Uber, United Taxi and a wheelchair provider, CareRide. Having multiple partners has been key to making sure PSTA has accessibility, accessibility for the unbanked, and accessibility for people who don't have smartphones. They piloted the project in an area of the county where the agency wanted to eliminate a circulator route. PSTA would partner with Uber and subsidize part of a trip to bus station or transit center – at $3 per trip. The challenge with this initial pilot was that many of the customers were unbanked, elderly and untrusting of using services like Uber.

However, the people that did use the service really liked and benefited from it. Now, PSTA is expanding the service to eight areas across the county.

The MOD Sandbox grant is focused on paratransit and PSTA's partnership with Lyft. If customers need a paratransit ride, they can call on-demand into a PSTA flex connector dispact that would have software to tell them where the neareast vehicle is. That vehicle could be Lyft, United Taxi, or Care Ride.

Rich Farr, Executive Director, rabbittransit, York, PA

Rabbittransit applied for a Rides to Wellness grant, with PennDOT and received that grant to tie the agency's trip planning software to the statewide paratransit software when people book trips. When customers book their medical trip, it automatically books their trip into rabbittransit's software, so it's tied together.

Rabbittransit is also engaged in other initiatives with external partners. The agency and GIANT grocery stores, the area's largest grocery store provider, have funded a dedicated shuttle to all the public high-rise apartments to the grocery store five days a week. They just expanded it by two days, it was originally three days a week. The agency has also created an Uber coordinator, it's a high-level dispatch person who oversees their scheduling software. If there are any trips that make more sense on Uber, they use that system.

Questions and Answers from Participants

Has anyone had issues with vehicle types using Uber or Lyft?

- Certainly with the TNCs, DART has had issues with vehicle types and how do we control that; hence, the motivation to do the public Uber. The other thing that we do, certainly on the Paratransit side is we have 60% of our fleet are cabs and they're all mobility equipped.

- PSTA hasn't had an issue, yet, with the vehicle type. This may be because we have multiple partners and Lyft is talking to a company locally that outfits vans for wheelchairs for veterans and trying to sign up those veterans to be Lyft drivers.

- For rabbittransit and Uber, because we haven't used Lyft, they've just come to town, there's a way to send a message in the Uber app that you can give to the driver. And because everyone who's riding with us with Uber is our existing clientele who we have great detail on with all kinds of information, we are communicating any mobility needs to the Uber driver. So, we'll put things like please assist, or visually impaired, go to the door. We're putting notes in there and so far there's been no pushback that no, we're not going to do that.

How are you addressing transferring the risk, liability?

- Uber has an umbrella insurance policy that covers up to $1million, it's in their agreement with DART, above and beyond what the employee—the driver themselves have. So, there is some protection there. There are challenges though.

- Monterey is a small enough community that when you see the drivers who are booted out and have their permits revoked, staff know who these people are. But they're driving for Uber within a week. In California, the PUC has full authority over Uber and local jurisdictions have no authority, and the PUC has 25 personnel dedicated to managing all, tens of thousands, of TNC drivers, private limousines, and private charter busses that this is all regulated everywhere. So, there's virtually no regulation on the vehicle maintenance side, safety side so this liability aspect is very concerning.

- In Pennsylvania, it's kind of the opposite. Outside of Philadelphia, the PUC oversees the taxi providers and the minimum requirement for insurance is $35,000, and that's what they all have, $35,000. So, we have a statewide insurance pool and our requirement is to have at least $1 million, ideally, $2 million recovery so we can't even contract with a taxi provider.

- At PSTA, we're really addressing it by having multiple partners, and I think that solved a lot of problems for us. The other thing is when we were talking about our Direct Connect program, as a coupon, so we pay that coupon and that makes a difference, too, because we're just offering a discounted ride rather than giving the ride.

Cassandra, you specifically mentioned that PTSA was trying to replace a circulator route. Was that union operated?

- Yes. Circulator route is union operated. We have told our union, we're a right-to-work state, but we have told our union that there will be no jobs lost, any changes that we make we would do through attrition. So, we have not had any issues with the union.

Cassandra, did you think about cash versus smartphone payment for your premium on-demand paratransit service. Because, that's the one issue that we see, is how you provide the same uniform service for people that don't have a smartphone for that sort of service?
- This is a challenge with our operations department and they're going to have to start taking credit cards. We have a point of sale program that we use through our customer service and we're going to bring that also to be into our flex connector department so that they will have to take people's cards over the phone. So, if it's someone that's non-bank they will have to take the taxi, and so that's part of the choice in the Paratransit.

Roundtable discussion on navigating the change from a Transit Authority to "Mobility Authority"

Facilitators:
- Marlene B. Connor, Immediate Past Chair, APTA Mobility Management Committee; and Principal/Manager, Marlene Connor Associates, LLC, Holyoke, MA
- Judy Shanley, Co-Director, National Center for Mobility Management; and Assistant Vice President Education & Youth Transition, Easter Seals, Chicago, IL Chicago, IL

What are some of the organization structural issues that we collectively need to think about when we think about integrative mobility, when we think about all the new partners, when we think about all the new players?

- HART's contracts require background checks
- Integrated ITS and service functions
- Agencies should do a "self-evaluation" to discover tools needed to do this
- Boards should adopt a mission statement and create a demand internally for this type of thinking
- Rewrite job descriptions and include mobility management
- We can be the hub and broker of the trip
- Convene a mobility management committee within the agency
- Demographics drive Service – Explore using existing debit card systems for fares also developing products like a "Transit Card" that works like a credit card for smart phones
  - Concern about credit card fees – We should define APTA's role in working with agencies to develop these products
- Business Model –need to consider market share in relation to new innovators
- Need to develop guidelines across providers

Who are and how did you find your external partners?

- Look at service providers with excess capacity
- Software companies
- Partnerships with cities – parking programs
- Mobility management is the process of identifying gaps – identifying partners
- TNC providers – microtransit providers – Chariot, Bridj
- These partnerships also necessitated a second look at technology companies
- Integrated Mobility Authorities – roads, etc. – smart cities work
- Where are other venues to examine partnerships?
  - Possibly coordinated planning process?

Where have these conversations started within your organizations/ What did it take to begin these partnerships?

- Finance department with the development of an app that integrated TNCs with our service.
- A state Senator was really pro-TNCs and our agency began exploring partnerships with them
- You don't develop organizational structures around people, but around the people that drive the projects.
- Working with people in the legal and procurement departments to develop new RFP standards, new contractual standards to begin

What's the message? How do you make this compelling for boards who maybe have been in place for a long time to think of this as in the bailiwick of an agency?

Internally

- Look for new contractual standards that allow flexibility

- We need to have people from procurement that develop contracts on our side – Get them to Yes!
- The data: require companies to promote trip data (DC required it in their contracts)
- Agencies Need to be able to articulate how innovation will solve problems

Public

- Start with targeted partner and manage communications
- Send communications about impact on lifestyle
- Develop trainings and support to enforce communications and messaging
- Maintain level of quality in your systems – not a verbal communicative effort, but visual cues

Other ideas?

- How do you buy a package of services?
- There is need to decide who should manage this – capacity, sustainability, knowledge
- SOS App – what happens when rideshare fails?
- How do you set up individual mobility accounts

What can NCMM/APTA do?

- Compile examples of contractual language
- Develops Tools related to environmental scan – SWOT
- Help identify events/forums to be….where should we be?
- Develop a platform to share info
- Work with FTA to learn what other programs can help agencies
- Smart cities grantees, MOD, Rides to Wellness – Create forums for them to share information
- Look outside of FTA/DOT – VA, HHS, other agencies
- Conversations with different players