

# Implementation of Research Findings and Products

## Purpose

TRB requires that TCRP research projects include preparation of a memorandum that develops and documents recommendations to implement the research findings and products. This Technical Memorandum responds to this requirement and outlines recommendations and ideas for dissemination and implementation of the findings of TCRP Project B-48, “The Provision of Alternative Services by Transit Agencies: The Intersection of Regulation and Program.”

The memo is to cover four components:

- Recommendations on how to best put the research findings/product into practice.
- Possible institutions that might take leadership in applying the research findings/product.
- Issues affecting potential implementation of the findings/products and possible actions to address those issues.
- Methods for identifying and measuring impacts associated with implementation of the research findings/products.

## Background

According to the TCRP B-48 research project’s RFP, the objective of the project is to understand how taxis, ride-sourcing services, and other non-dedicated service providers are being used for alternative services for individuals with disabilities.

The research involved:

- The identification of the regulatory matters that govern alternative services and their requirements.
- A survey of 18 transit agencies’ alternative service.
- In-depth case studies of five of those alternative services.
- Interviews with providers of alternative services – three TNCs, a broker, and a large taxi company.
- Assessment of the varying models and type of subsidies used for providing alternative services and the policies structuring the service.
- Collection of various materials provided by the surveyed transit agencies, including contracts and RFPs for an alternative service, available as resources for other transit agencies planning an alternative service.
- Development of an Excel-based tool that can be used to help estimate whether the alternative service reduces overall costs for providing ADA paratransit.

Implementation of the research findings and products addressed in this Memorandum focuses on four main products of the research project, which can help support transit agencies considering as well as planning an alternative service for their ADA paratransit riders:

- The data tool, which is available for transit agencies to use when planning an alternative service and when evaluating such a service after deployment and with six to 12 months of experience.
- Identification of the regulatory matters that a transit agency needs to address in planning, implementing, and providing an alternative service for ADA paratransit riders.
- The assessment of the different models used to structure an alternative service, for example, a provider-side subsidy or a user-side subsidy, and the range of policies that frame the service. The assessment identifies the advantages and disadvantages of the different options, such as use of trip limits.
- Sample materials used by transit agencies for planning and implementing their alternative service, such as RFPs and contract documents.

## 1. Recommendations for Getting Research Findings into Practice

### Publicize the availability of the research through:

- The weekly Transportation Research E-Newsletter
- APTA's Passenger Transport—APTA's print newsletter
- National Center for Mobility Management
- Conferences such as the DRT/TRANSED conference to be held September 2022.
- CTAA publications (CT Fast Mail, Digital CT, CT Magazine)

### Webinar opportunities

- TRB-hosted webinar following publication of the B-48 report.
- Webinars potentially given by Panel members. KFH will provide PowerPoint presentation slides to Panel members upon request for their use for a webinar presentation.

### Presentation at conferences, with opportunities including

- Annual TRB meeting in Washington, D.C., 2023
- Annual APTA Mobility Conference; next one is April 2023 in Minneapolis
- Biennial DRT Conference
- State transit conferences: Panel members could modify the PowerPoint presentation prepared by the research team for their own presentations

## Future projects and studies conducted by the research team

- The research team members work on various transportation projects for different client agencies across the country and can use the findings of the report in future projects and studies that assess ADA paratransit services. (We are currently using the research findings to help inform a large ADA paratransit project in Nashville.)

## 2. Institutions that Might Lead Implementation

- APTA
- APTA Access Committee
- TRB's Paratransit Subcommittee
- TCRP B-48 Panel members
- National Transit Institute, if the workshop curriculum developed for the B-48 research project is adopted for an NTI training offering

## 3. Issues Affecting Implementation and Possible Solutions

**The data tool developed for the project may become less effective or ineffective depending on the experiences of transit agencies with different alternative services that may not align with the framework used in 2022 to develop the tool.**

### Possible solutions

- A follow-up study could recalibrate the data tool using new data from alternative services in operation from transit agencies that share their data. This might be a new TCRP project or possibly a project for a graduate student studying public transportation.

**Transit agency boards of directors or other senior staff at transit agencies (e.g., legal counsel) may not want to provide an alternative service, with possible concerns about working with TNCs.**

### Possible solutions

- Transit agencies with such concerns should review FTA's published material about working with TNCs, available on the FTA's website. They can also reach out to the transit agencies surveyed through the B-48 research project to hear directly from their experiences. Additionally, they might also contact their FTA regional representatives to pose specific questions about working with TNCs.

**Transit agency planners may have concerns about inducing too much demand with an on-demand service for their ADA paratransit riders so that an alternative service would prove too costly for the transit agency.**

**Possible solutions**

- Transit agencies should use the B-48 project's data tool to run different scenarios for their alternative service, testing different subsidy levels and looking for a conservative subsidy level and possibly considering use of trip limits as well.
- When implemented, the alternative service should be clearly labeled a pilot. The service might also start with a subset of ADA riders eligible to test use and assess induced trip-making.

**The private for-hire transportation industry may constrict from the effects of the pandemic, recession and high gas prices to a level so that it is not reliably available to provide alternative services.**

**Possible solutions**

- A transit agency could look for a local provider, such as a taxi company, that is still somewhat viable and use the alternative service to help build its business.
- The alternative service could start as a small pilot with a local provider to test use and demand. This could help demonstrate if the added trips could sustain the provider's participation.
- The transit agency could use its own vehicles and any excess capacity to supplement the service of the local provider.

**The private for-hire transportation industry may turn to autonomous vehicles that will be less effective for meeting the needs of some of the ADA paratransit riders using an alternative service.**

**Possible solutions**

- Transit agencies will need to require that any providers that rely on autonomous vehicles that wish to participate in an alternative service must have a person on-board the vehicle for specified trips, particularly those for riders using mobility devices.

## **4. Methods to Identify and Measure Impacts of Implementation**

**Number of downloads of the B-48 report from the TRB website.**

- One straightforward way to assess the impact of the B-48 research project's product is the number of times the report is downloaded from the TRB website.

**Self-reporting of transit agencies that implement an alternative service.**

- Articles in industry publications
- Presentations at industry conferences

**A TCRP synthesis project is an opportunity to assess the “state of the practice” of transit agencies’ use of alternative services.**

- As part of the research, the selected Synthesis consultant would inquire if the B-48 guidebook and/or tool had a role in the sampled transit agencies’ planning and implementation of an alternative service.

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