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**TRB** TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH BOARD

# TRB Webinar: Microtransit—Innovation in Rural Mobility

*October 20, 2022*

*1:00 – 2:30 PM*

NOVEMBER 2022 UPDATE

# AICP Credit Information

## 1.5 American Institute of Certified Planners Certification Maintenance Credits

You must attend the entire webinar

Log into the American Planning Association website to claim your credits

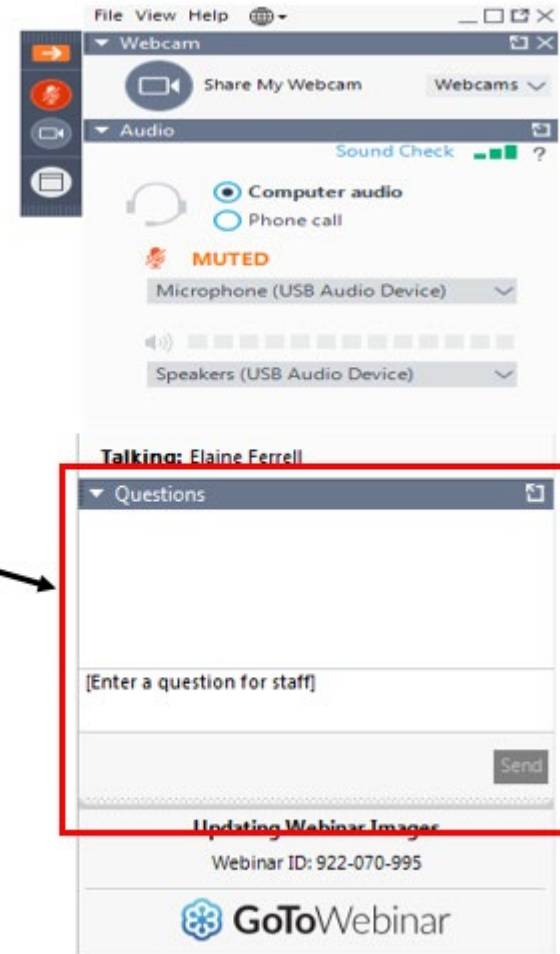
Contact AICP, not TRB, with questions

# Learning Objectives

- Explain the connections between microtransit options exist and peer community experiences
- Identify ways microtransit may complement or substitute for existing rural transit services
- Take first action steps to assess microtransit strategies in a community or region

# Questions and Answers

- Please type your questions into your webinar control panel
- We will read your questions out loud, and answer as many as time allows





# Today's presenters



Jonathan Brooks  
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Gronna Jones  
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*Wilson Transit (RIDE)*



Dana Platt  
[dana@ridecarts.com](mailto:dana@ridecarts.com)  
*Capital Area Rural Transportation System*



## **NCHRP 20-65 Task 76:**

# **Opportunities for State DOTs (and others) to Encourage Shared Use Mobility Practices in Rural Areas**

## **TRB Webinar: Microtransit – Innovation in Rural Mobility**

October 20, 2022

**Presenter: Dr. Ranjit Godavarthy**

Associate Professor, Department of Transportation, Logistics, and Finance;

Associate Research Fellow, Small Urban and Rural Center on Mobility;

North Dakota State University

# Research Team



**Ranjit Godavarthy, Ph.D.**  
**(Principal Investigator)**

- Assistant Professor, NDSU;
- Associate Research Fellow, Small Urban and Rural Transit Center, UGPTI, NDSU



**Sean Libberton**  
**(Principal-In-Charge)**

Vice President, Project  
Strategy & Grants, Advisory  
Services, WSP



**Jill Hough, Ph.D.**  
**(Senior Advisor)**

- Associate Professor, NDSU;
- Director, Small Urban and Rural Transit Center, UGPTI, NDSU



**Russell Koff**  
**(Advisor/Researcher)**  
Advisory Services, WSP

# “How can you use the report?”

- *Learn about emerging transportation solutions that can improve mobility in rural or small-urban communities.*
- *Help identify the type of shared-use mobility service that can meet your rural community's mobility needs (ex: rural ridesourcing, bikesharing, carsharing, etc.,)*
- *Guide rural community representatives, and their stakeholders to strategically plan, and implement Shared-Use Mobility (SUM) services.*
- *Provide guidance on the role that government, state DOTs, rural transit agencies, transportation planning agencies, and/or state economic development or small business development agencies to promote and advance rural SUM practices.*

# Introduction

- Shared-Use Mobility (SUM): transportation services that are shared among users (public transit; taxis and limousines; ridesourcing, carsharing, bikesharing, and ridesharing programs; microtransit services; scooter-sharing; shuttle services; and neighborhood shuttles).
- Smartphones, and technological advancements have presented new convenient and flexible options: ridesourcing, carsharing, bikesharing, microtransit, etc., - “technology enabled SUM.”
- Technology enabled SUMs are much prominent in urban setup compared to rural.
- Transit services are critical for rural communities - SUM practices have the potential to fill the mobility gaps
- This study investigates opportunities for SUM in rural areas, and also in small-urban areas when applicable.

# Study Objectives

- Review and compile emerging SUM practices and programs primarily from US rural settings.
- **Conduct SUM Interviews** - Learn about opportunities and challenges for various SUM practices in rural communities.
- **Conduct in-depth case studies** - Learn about planning and implementation aspects of rural SUM implementations.
- **Develop Rural SUM toolkit** – Toolkit can help rural communities become informed about tasks involved for strategically planning, and implementing various SUM services.
- **Develop Guidance Document** - Provide detailed guidance on the role of government, State DOTs, rural transit agencies, transportation planning agencies, and/or state economic development or small business development agencies have to play to advance SUM services in rural areas.
- **Convene a Focus Group** - Validate the rural SUM toolkit, and guidance documents with a focus group of experts in the field.



## **Shared-Use Mobility (SUM) Practices Considered.**

- Ridesourcing (TNCs such as Uber, Lyft, Feonix Mobility Rising, etc.,)
- Carsharing (Zipcar, Car2go, Enterprise Carshare, etc.,)
- Bikesharing (BCycle, Citi Bike, Zagster, etc.,)
- Microtransit (Chariot, Bridj, Via etc.,)
- Mobility as a Service (MaaS)

## **Rural and Small Urban Areas Defined.**

- Rural Areas – Population < 50,000
- Small Urban Areas – Population 50,000 – 200,000

# SUM Interviews

SUM Category	Agencies	Community
<b>Ridesourcing</b>	1. Uber 2. Lyft 3. Feonix Mobility Rising 4. Ruby Ride	1. North Mankato, MN (Pop: 13,746) 2. State of Missouri (Missouri HealthTran Partnership) 3. Breckenridge, CO (Pop: 4,982)
<b>Carsharing</b>	1. Zipcar 2. GM Maven	1. Needles, CA (Pop: 4,844) 2. Breckenridge, CO (Pop: 4,982)
<b>Bikesharing</b>		1. Manhattan, KS (Pop: 53,678) 2. Allen County, KS
<b>Microtransit</b>	1. Via	1. Arlington, TX (396,394)
<b>Rural MaaS</b>	1. Feonix Mobility Rising 2. Bosch/SPLT	1. Winnebago County, WI 2. Three Rural Michigan counties (Grand Traverse, Benzie, Allegan).

# Eight In-depth Case Studies of Rural SUM Implementations



## Case Study 5: Via Microtransit Service in the City of Arlington.

- The City of Arlington is the first city in the nation to offer on-demand ridesourcing as its sole public transportation solution.
- In 2017, the City of Arlington, TX, partnered with Via Transportation, Inc., to provide on-demand ridesourcing as a public transportation solution (referred to as microtransit service) to its central business district.
- The Via microtransit service replaced a fixed route-bus line to provide on-demand trips in premium vans.
- The budget for the first year's operations was funded by the city and FTA.
- **Impact:** 100 percent increase in public transit ridership, 97 percent customer satisfaction rate, and efficient public transportation service.



Source: Via  
Microtransit User  
Interface and Steps to  
Access a Ride.

## **Case Study 5:** Via Microtransit Service in the City of Arlington.

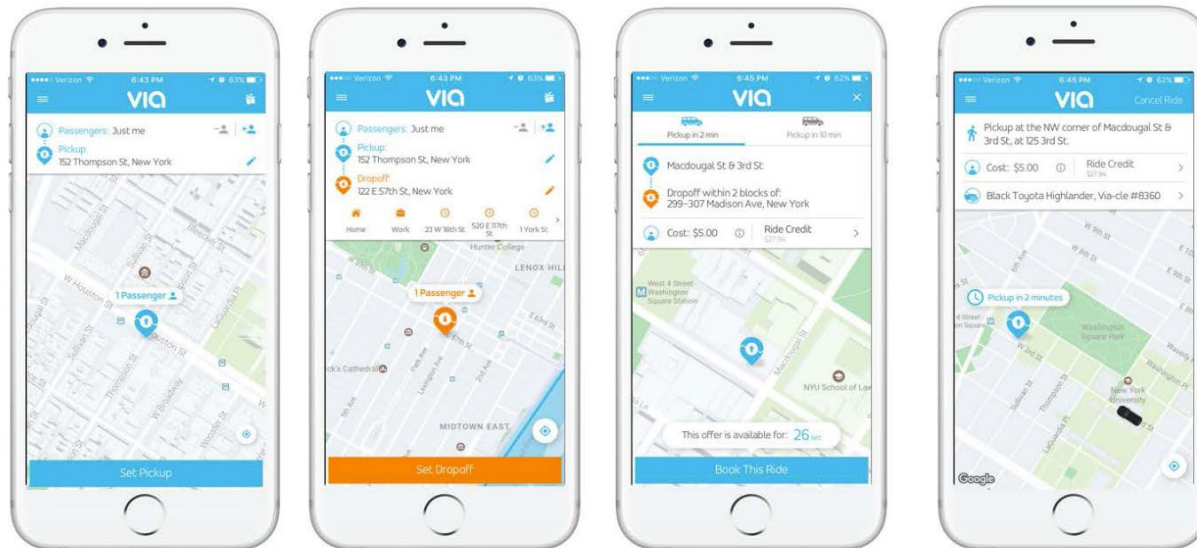
- The microtransit service has proven very successful. City expanded the service area several times and added more vehicles to meet the demand.
- As part of the service, Via provided vehicles, drivers, technology, and routing.
- Designed to provide affordable transportation to key areas of Arlington by connecting riders to entertainment centers, shopping, dining options, work, school, medical appointments, etc.,
- Unlike a fixed-route bus system, Via service is more of a personalized transportation option where users are picked up where they want to be picked up in smaller premium vehicles.



Source: Via  
Microtransit User  
Interface and Steps to  
Access a Ride.

## Case Study 5: Via Microtransit Service in the City of Arlington.

- Customers can book a ride in one of these Mercedes-Benz Metris vans using a Via smartphone application, and Via's sophisticated technology will match the customer with other riders going their way.
- Via is also a cashless service.
- For users who do not use a smartphone, rides can be requested by calling a live support phone line.
- Rides are charged a flat rate of \$3 per trip.
- The Via fare is subsidized to make the on-demand transportation option affordable.
- Without subsidies, the cost per trip is approximately \$9



Select Pickup

Select Drop-off

Confirm Offer

Walk to Pickup Corner



## More Recent Rural Microtransit Implementations

### **Wilson, North Carolina (Population: 49,310)**

- New on-demand service launched in Sept 2020.
- To book a ride - Riders have option to use Via app, use a web portal, or call central booking line.
- Service accepts prepaid debit cards to also serve city's unbanked population.

### **Newton, Massachusetts (Population: 88,322)**

- City's on-demand service specifically caters the community's senior population.
- Since the target population is not traditionally tech-savvy, more than half of the seniors were observed to call to book their rides.

# Output 1: Rural SUM Toolkit – Five Task Process

**Task 1:** Identify mobility gaps, and determine service needs.

*[1. Gather input from citizens and community representatives, 2. Leadership from community partners, 3. Form preliminary partnerships]*

**Task 2:** Determine SUM category that best suits rural community needs. *[Ridesourcing, Carsharing, Bikesharing, Microtransit, Rural Mobility-as-a-Service]*

**Task 3:** Public Private Partnerships. *[Private SUM service providers are important for rural SUM implementation]*

**Task 4:** Evaluate Challenges, Accessibility, and Impacts. *[limited funding, low demand, gaining trust, broadband coverage, ADA accessibility, access to smartphone and bank accounts]*

**Task 5:** Funding and Implementation. *[Most SUM services are capital-light business models, and benefit more from assistance for operational expenses. **Funding Sources:** FTA Formula Funds (5310 & 5311), MOD Grants, State DOT funding, Community Initiatives, and other national/state/local grants]*

## Output 2: Guidance for State DOTs and Other Agencies to Promote SUM services in Rural Areas

### 6 Opportunities for Promoting Rural SUMs

1. Diversify state DOT funding between traditional and SUM services.
2. Importance of FTA formula grants (5310 & 5311), FTA's MOD grants, and state DOT's transit funding.
3. Create a one-stop learning platform about rural transportation challenges, and SUM opportunities.
4. Ensure availability of broadband internet service in rural areas.
5. Advocate the significance of transportation towards healthcare and employment in rural communities.
6. Role of Regional Transportation Agencies.

# Acknowledgments

- NCHRP Project 20-65 Panel.
- Velvet Fitzpatrick, Senior Program Officer, NCHRP.
- Focus group participants, FTA, rural community contacts, and SUM providers.

# Questions?

## Contact Information:

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Associate Professor, NDSU.

Wilson, North Carolina





# Where We Started

- 6 routes (+3 Saturday only routes)
- 60 minute headways
- ~40% of city limits accessible by bus
- No tracking or visibility
- **Our problem.** How could we efficiently increase coverage and quality of service for our riders?

# Problems and Goals

## Fixed Route Challenges:

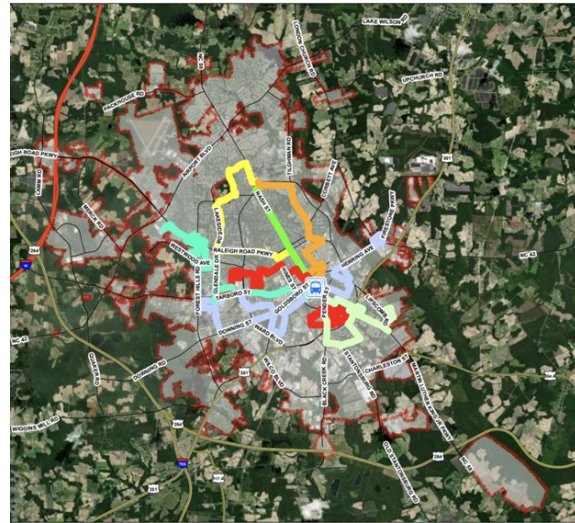
- Longer wait times (45 - 60 minutes)
- Lack of transparency (when is the next bus?)
- Limited service area due to fixed route nature
- No funding to increase transit coverage area

## Increased Access:

- Seniors - Door to Door/Phone Booking
- Unbanked - Alternative Payment Methods
- Riders w/o Smart Phones - Phone booking
- Riders with Disabilities - Door to Door Booking

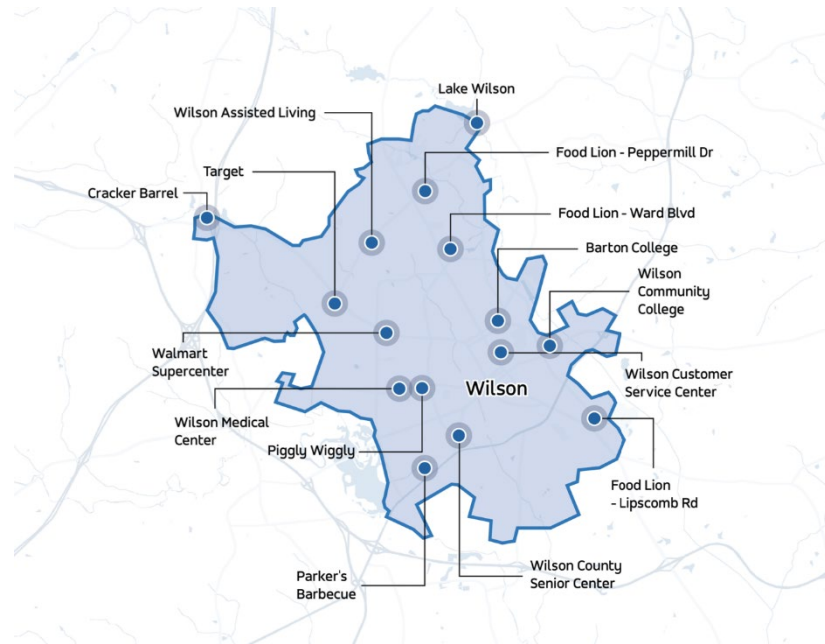
## RIDE Goals :

1. Reduce passenger wait times by using dynamic routing to bend supply to where demand is
2. Eliminate the guesswork! Show ETAs and provide real time tracking
3. Expand the utility of transit by opening up a broader service area
4. Cost competitive to fixed route



## RIDE was launched in September 2020 to replace all existing fixed routes with a fully on-demand microtransit service

- Sep-20 replaced all fixed routes with a 12+ vehicle on-demand service in Wilson
- Large population of riders who are senior citizens, unbanked, people with disabilities, and don't have access to a smartphone



# Flexibility of service has allowed us to address many different goals

## Fixed Route Challenges:

- Longer wait times (45 - 60 minutes)
- Lack of transparency (when is the next bus?)
- Limited service area due to fixed route nature

## Increased Access:

- Seniors - Door to Door/Phone Booking
- Unbanked - Alternative Payment Methods
- Riders w/o Smart Phones - Phone booking
- Riders with Disabilities - Door to Door Booking

## RIDE goals :

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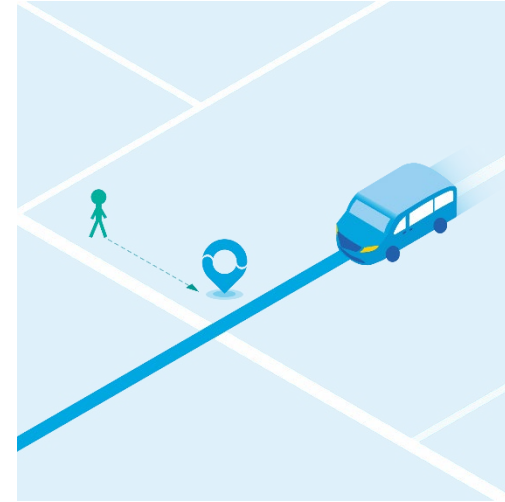
# How the technology works: smart rides with virtual stops



Pairs riders  
Traveling along  
the same path.



Matches riders with  
the best vehicle for  
that shared journey



Directs riders and drivers  
Dynamically to the best  
Virtual bus stop

# Users\* of the RIDE cross all walks of life...

57%

Of responding riders report annual household income **below \$25k**

73%

Of responding riders identify as **women**

80%

Of responding riders identify as **minorities**

86%

Of responding riders are **do not have access to a personal vehicle**

"It's my main transportation to and from work. If not I'd be left walking."

I don't have a car nor the income to comfortably afford that extra expense right now, this is the way I get to and from work. Also other places such as doctors appointments.





...and the service has had a HUGE impact on their lives

94%

Would be disappointed if they could no longer use RIDE  
And, on average, they rate their rides  
**4.9/5 stars**

57%

Say affordability is their main Reason for riding  
While almost **74%** of riders say the money they saved riding the service is one of its biggest benefits.

63%

Riders say RIDE has had an economic impact on their home or business  
While **48% of riders** say the service has helped them **gain or maintain employment**.

**“Independence! There's a huge blind population in Wilson, and transportation is a huge barrier to them having full productive live [and] careers”**

**“I had my first interview and [RIDE] are the ones who took me there then took me back home”**

Riders are booking often, and booking themselves



35%

**Of Passengers take 5+ rides a month**

*Booking by phone has dropped from 25% of bookings to 18% in 2021*



80%

**Of Riders Who Have Made a Booking Have Used the App**

## Results after first year of service

96,195

Rides Taken

9,000

Average Rides per month in  
2021, 50% higher than in 2020

19 min

Average ETA

2,591

Unique Riders

# RIDE overall performance since launch

**289,408**

Rides Taken

*August 2022  
highest ridership  
to date*

**3.7**

Average Utilization

*Avg. Utilization of  
4.2 in August*

**97.2%**

Of Demand Met

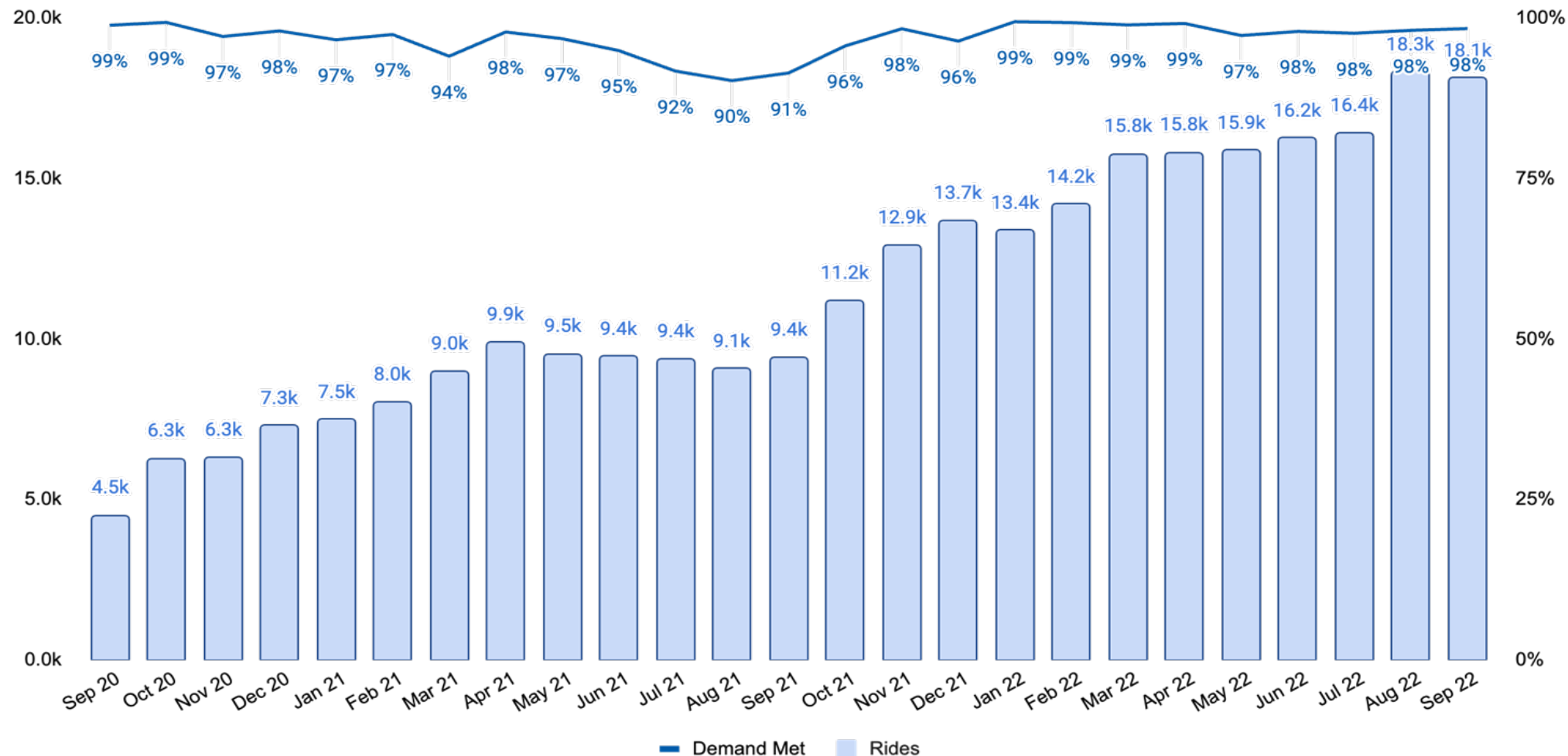
**6,492**

Unique Riders

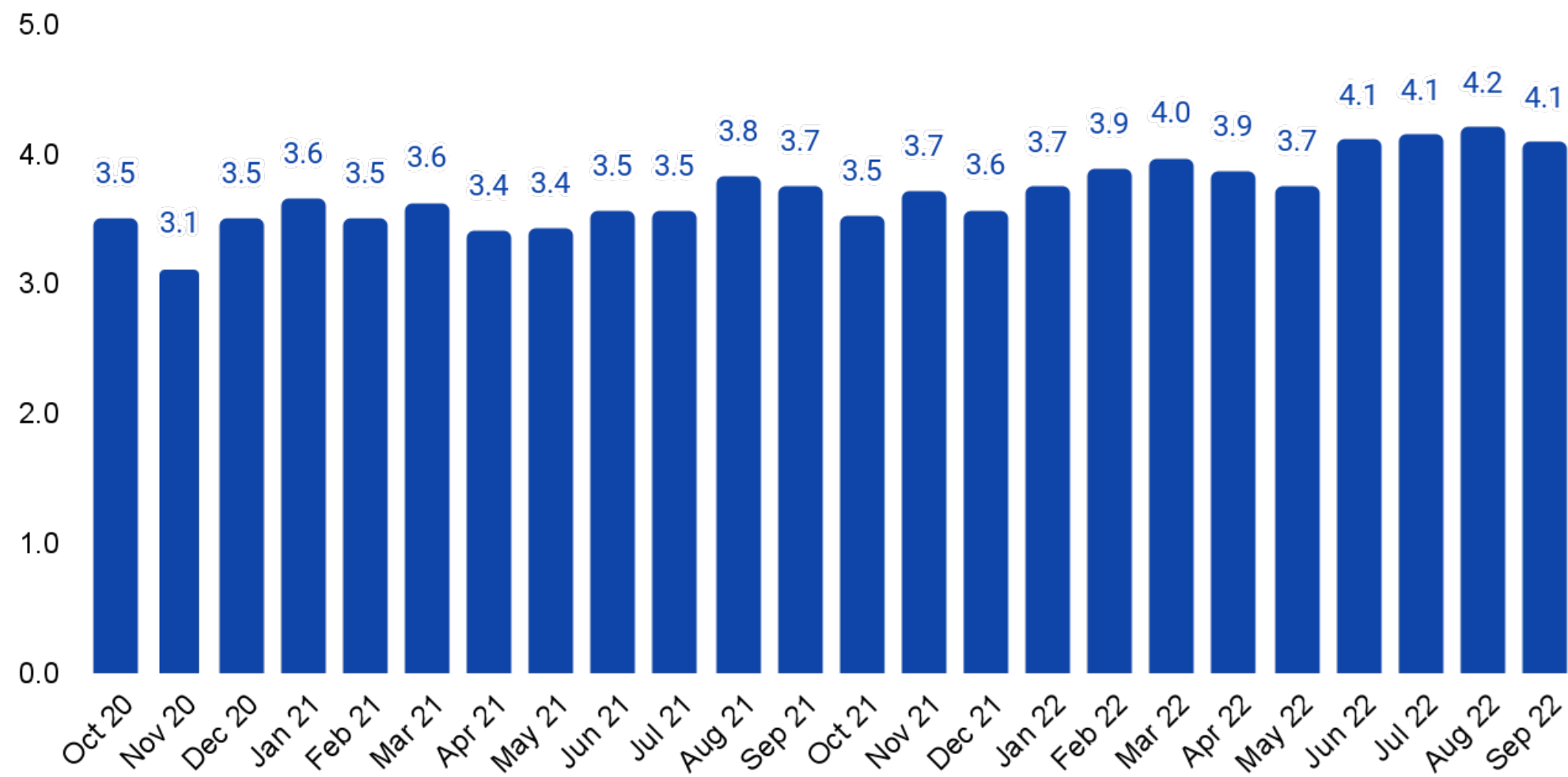
*Over 650 new  
riders in last 2  
months*

\*Data from 9/1/2020 – 9/30/2022

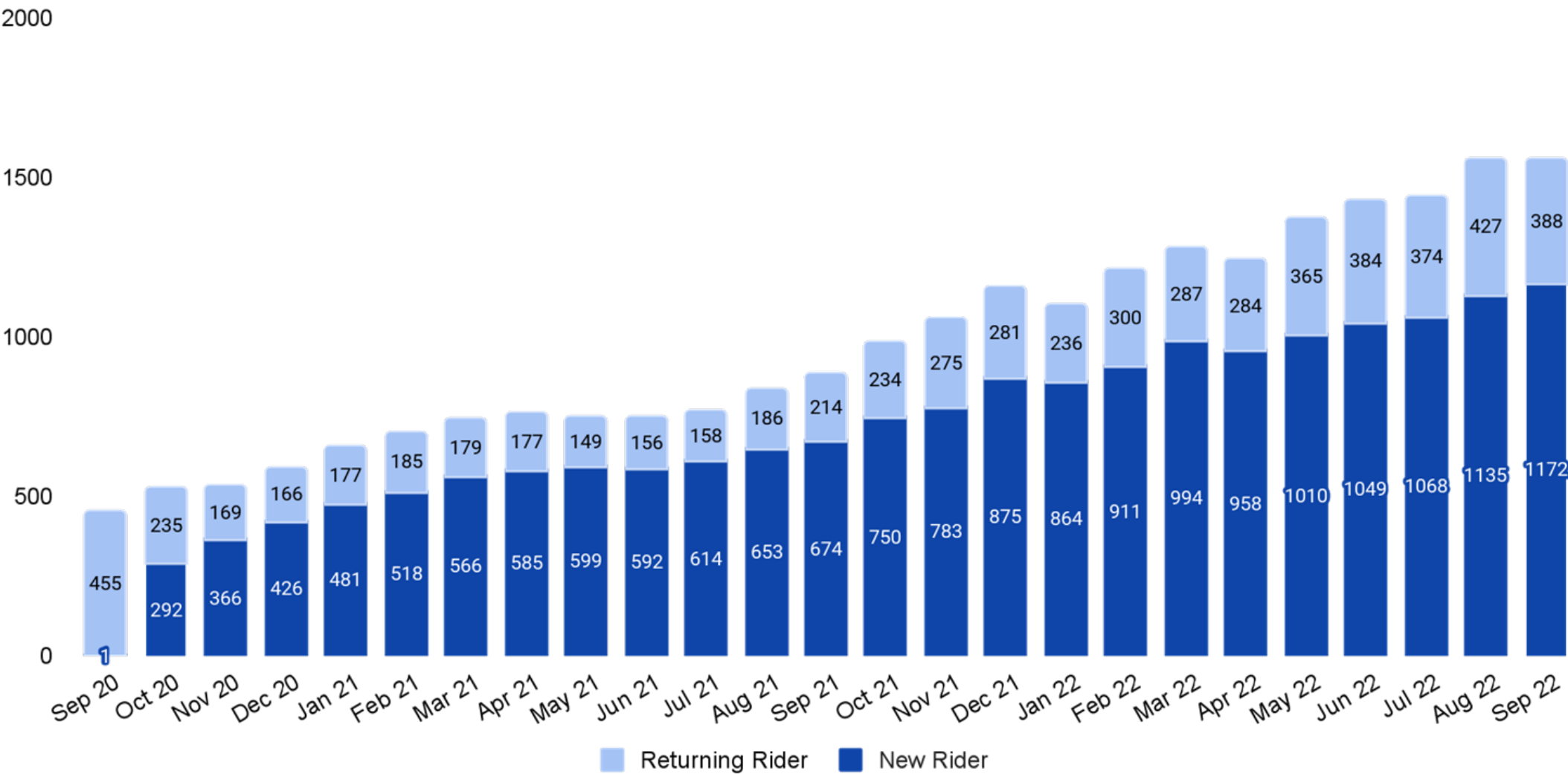
# Completed Rides and Met Demand Rate Since Launch



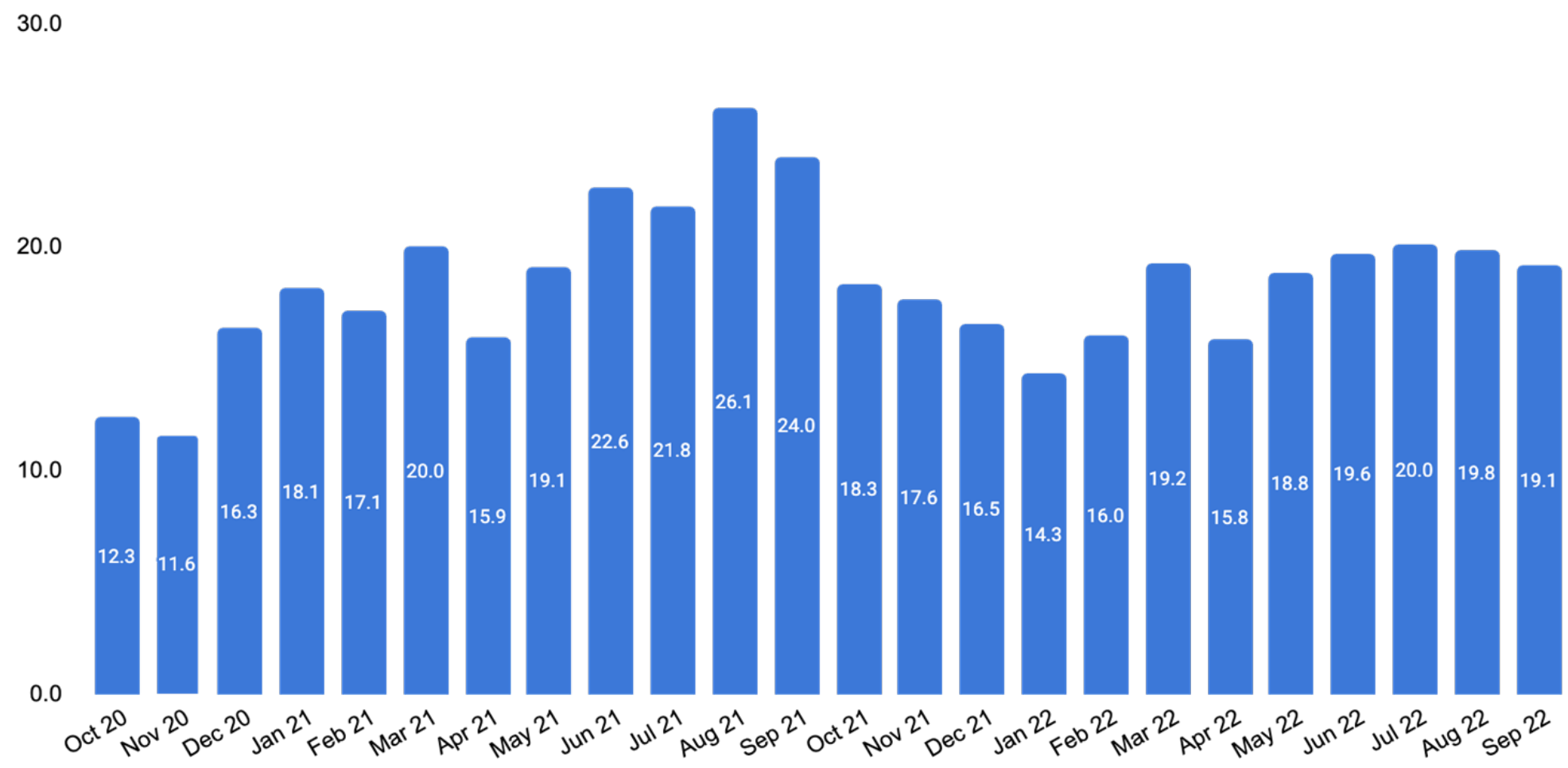
# Monthly Avg. Utilization Since Launch



# Monthly Unique Riders Since Launch



# Monthly Avg. ETAs Since Launch





# Where We Ended

- No more waiting for the bus. 15 min wait times. Get a ride within minutes.
- Book rides on your phone on the app or by calling in. Credit card & voucher payment
- Service throughout the entire city
- Customized rider accounts
- On-demand – no more bus stops
- Smaller, branded vans

## **What our riders say:**

**"RIDE is a great thing for Wilson. More convenient because you can get to more destinations than the city bus all around town. I love it."**

**"When I have to be somewhere I like to get where I'm going. On the city bus you had to transfer, get on another bus. You had to leave the house an hour 2 in advance just to make it somewhere on time."**

**"My mother stays in an area where the city bus only runs once a day, very early in the morning. I would need to walk a long way to get to her house before, but now I can go visit anytime."**

Gronna Jones

[gajones@wilsonnc.org](mailto:gajones@wilsonnc.org)

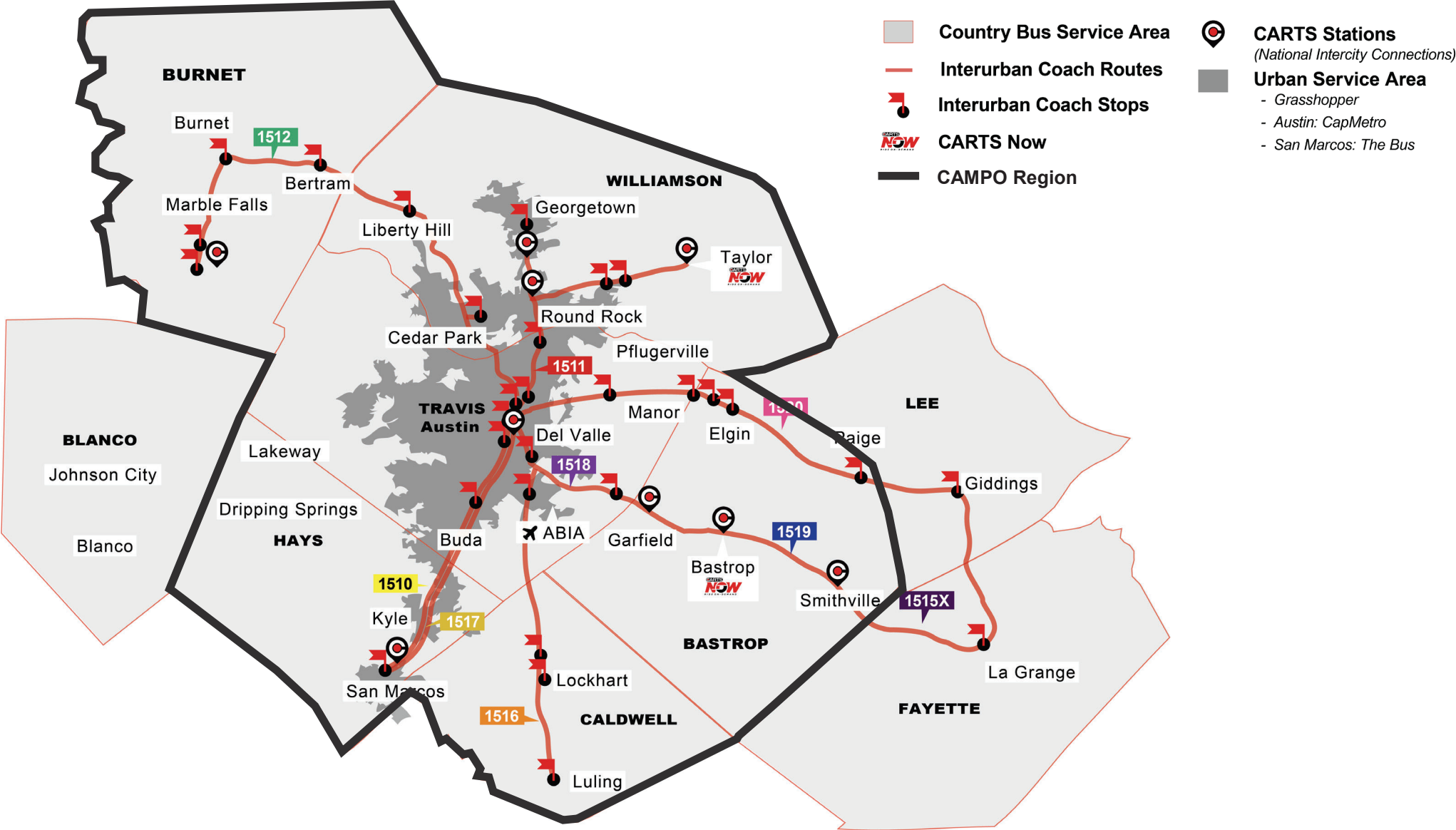




# New Service Applications – Microtransit in Rural communities

October 2023

# CARTS Service Area





# Meet the Fleet



## Interurban Coach

Fixed-schedule rides for commutes into urban areas or trips between rural areas



## Grasshopper

Call-ahead connections in Austin for Interurban Coach riders who are 65 & older or ADA eligible

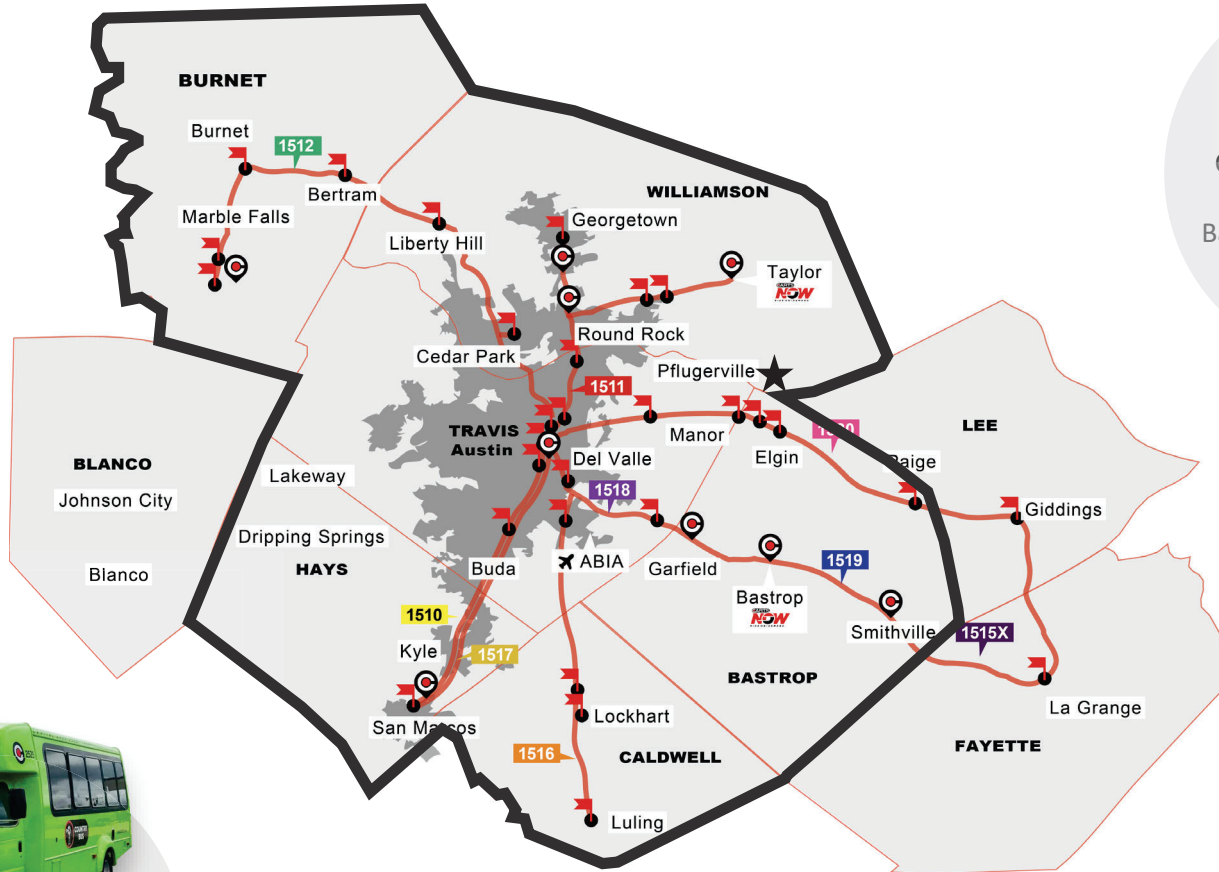


## Country Bus

Call-ahead rides to and from anywhere in the CARTS district



Scan to sign up for CARTS updates



## Legend

- Country Bus Service Area
- Interurban Coach Routes
- Interurban Coach Stops
- CARTS Now
- CAMPO Region

- CARTS Stations  
(National Intercity Connections)
- Urban Service Area
  - Grasshopper
  - Austin: CapMetro
  - San Marcos: The Bus



## CARTS Now

On-demand rides to and from anywhere within Bastrop and Taylor – more cities coming soon!



## National Intercity

Fixed-schedule connections and passenger & freight ticket to Greyhound lines. Direct connections to AMTRAK at San Marcos Station



## CapMetro Stations

Fixed-schedule stops at CapMetro stations in the Austin area





# Our Newest Service – CARTS NOW

## On-demand microtransit

- Curb to curb rides within 15 minutes
- Monday-Friday, 7am-7pm

## How to Book:

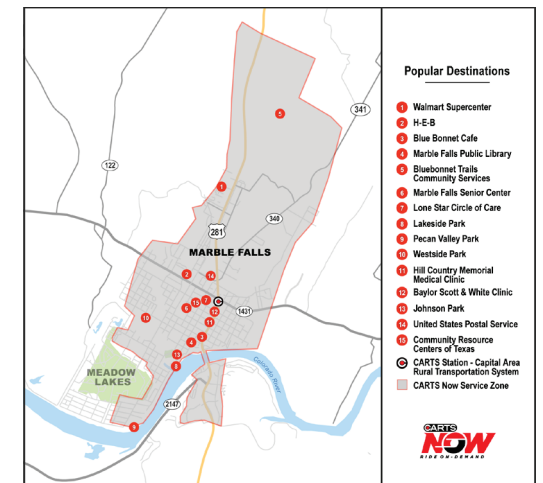
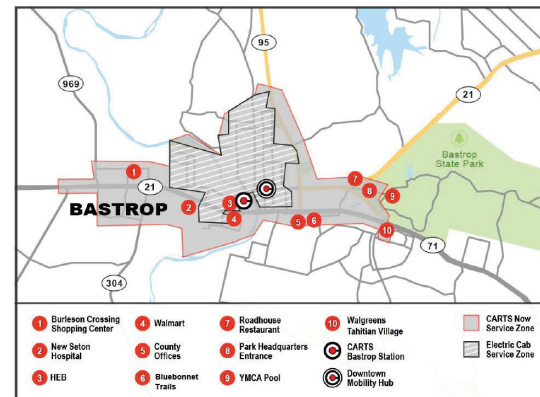
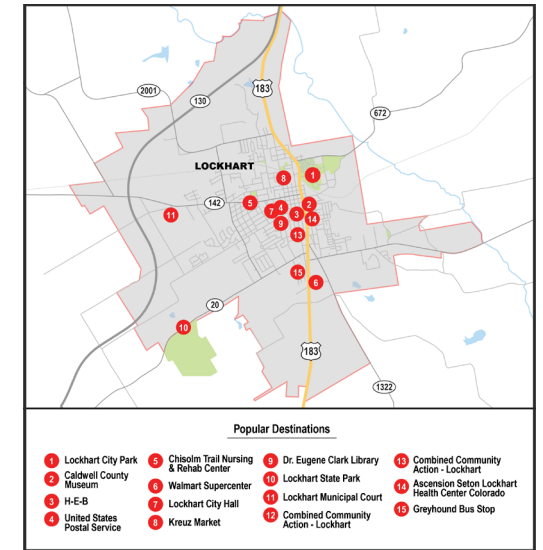
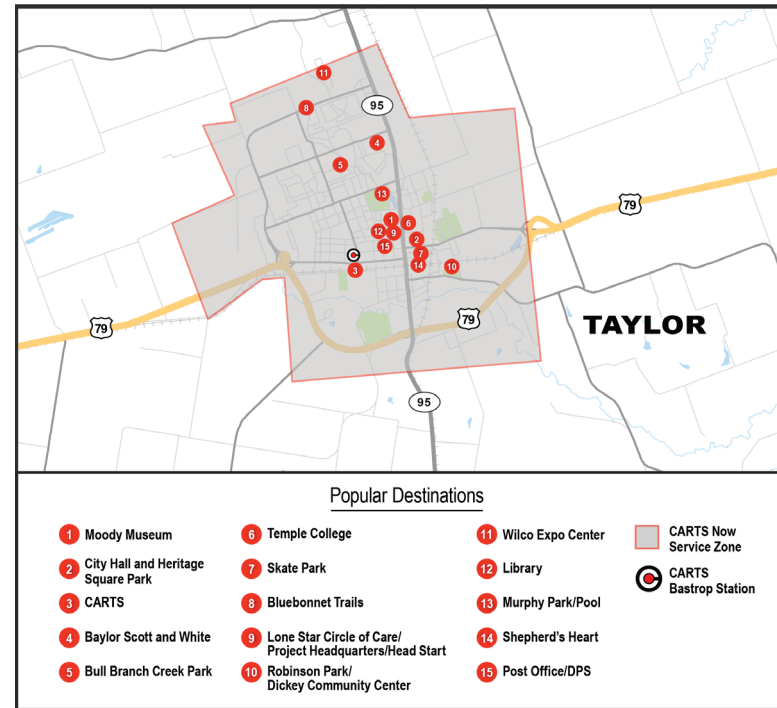
- Set pickup and dropoff locations in CARTS Now app
- Call CARTS Now service line (512)505-5666





# Where does it operate?

- The service is currently operating in Bastrop, Lockhart, Taylor and will begin operating in Marble Falls on October 3, 2022. See right for each exact service area.





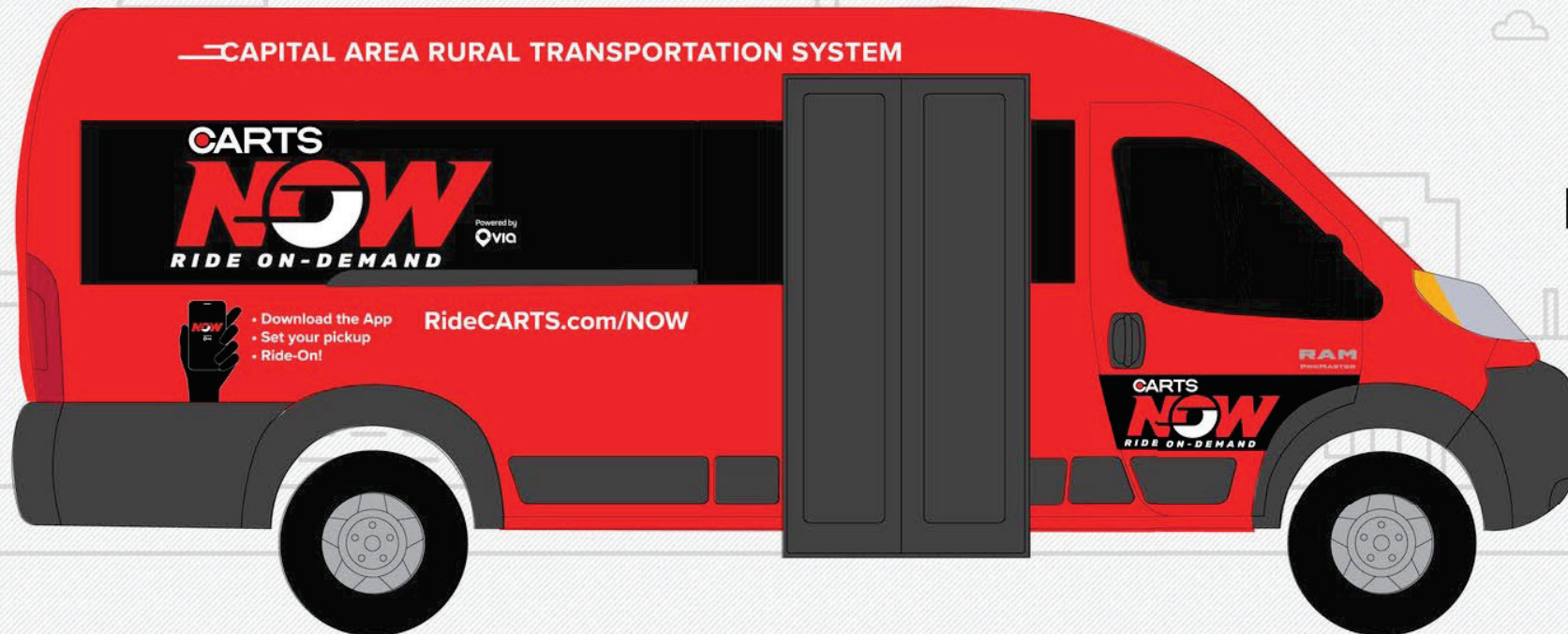


# MARBLE FALLS

# RIBBON CUTTING

**Monday, November 7**  
**1 p.m.**

**801 North US 281**  
**Marble Falls, TX 78654**





# CARTS NOW FARES



**One Way: \$2**  
**All Day Pass: \$6**  
**Monthly Pass: \$88**

Half Price Fares

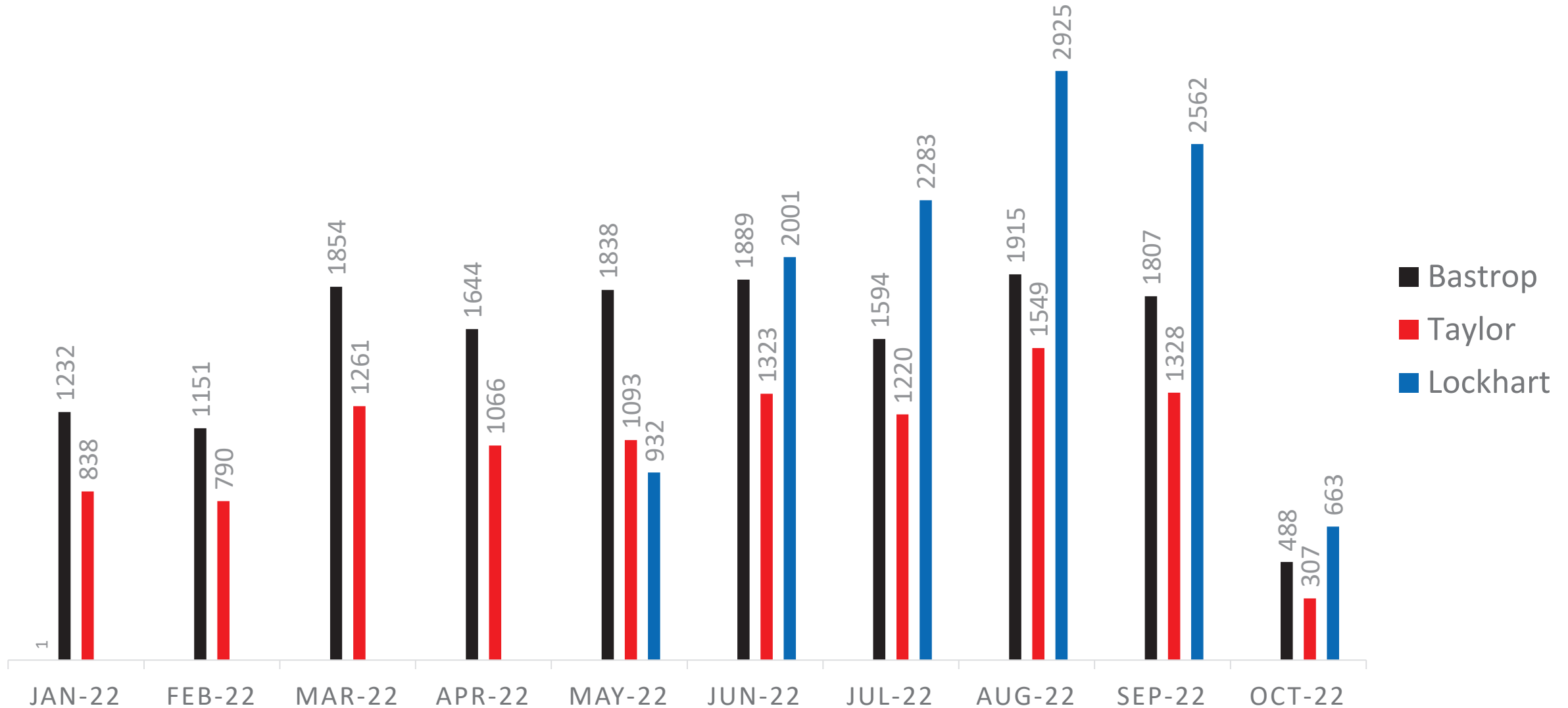
**Seniors over 65**  
**Persons with disabilities**  
**Children under 12 (with an adult)**

One Way: \$1 | All Day Pass: \$3  
Monthly Pass: \$44

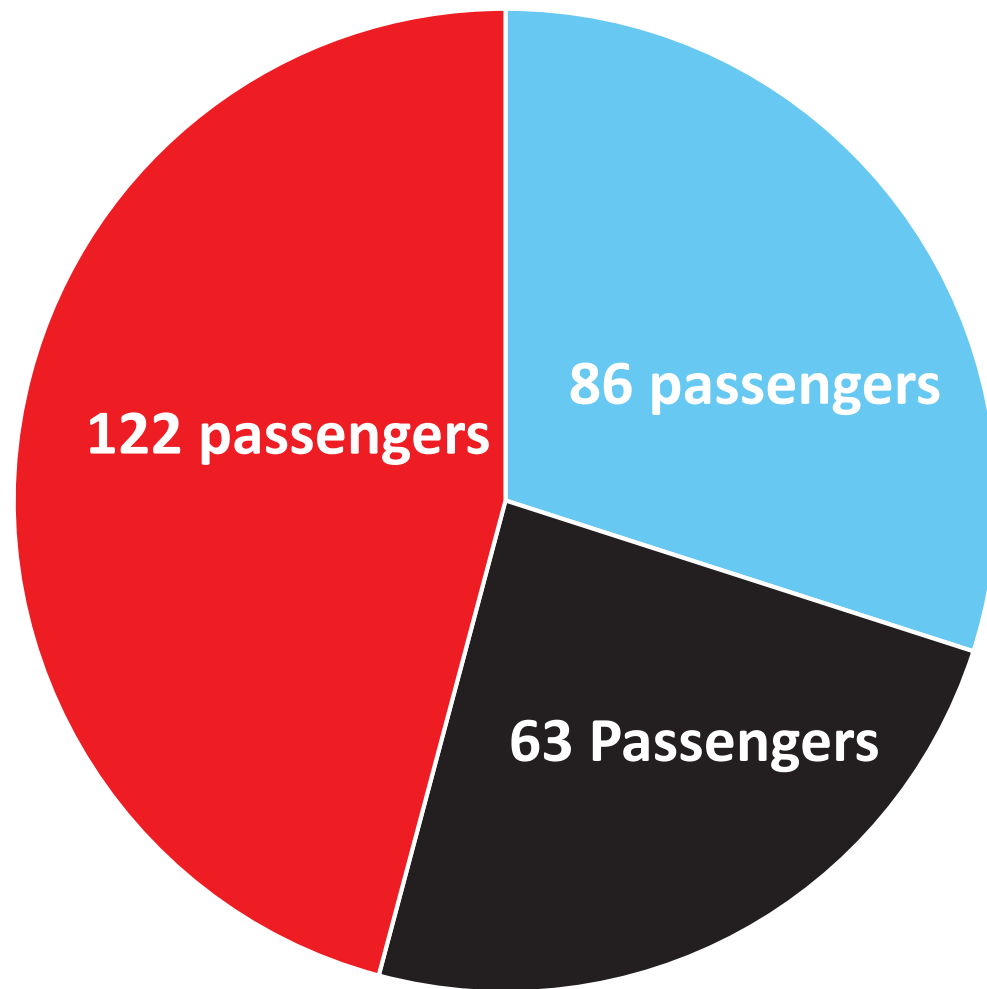
[www.ridecarts.com](http://www.ridecarts.com)

@RideCARTS   

# CARTS NOW 2022 Ridership Data

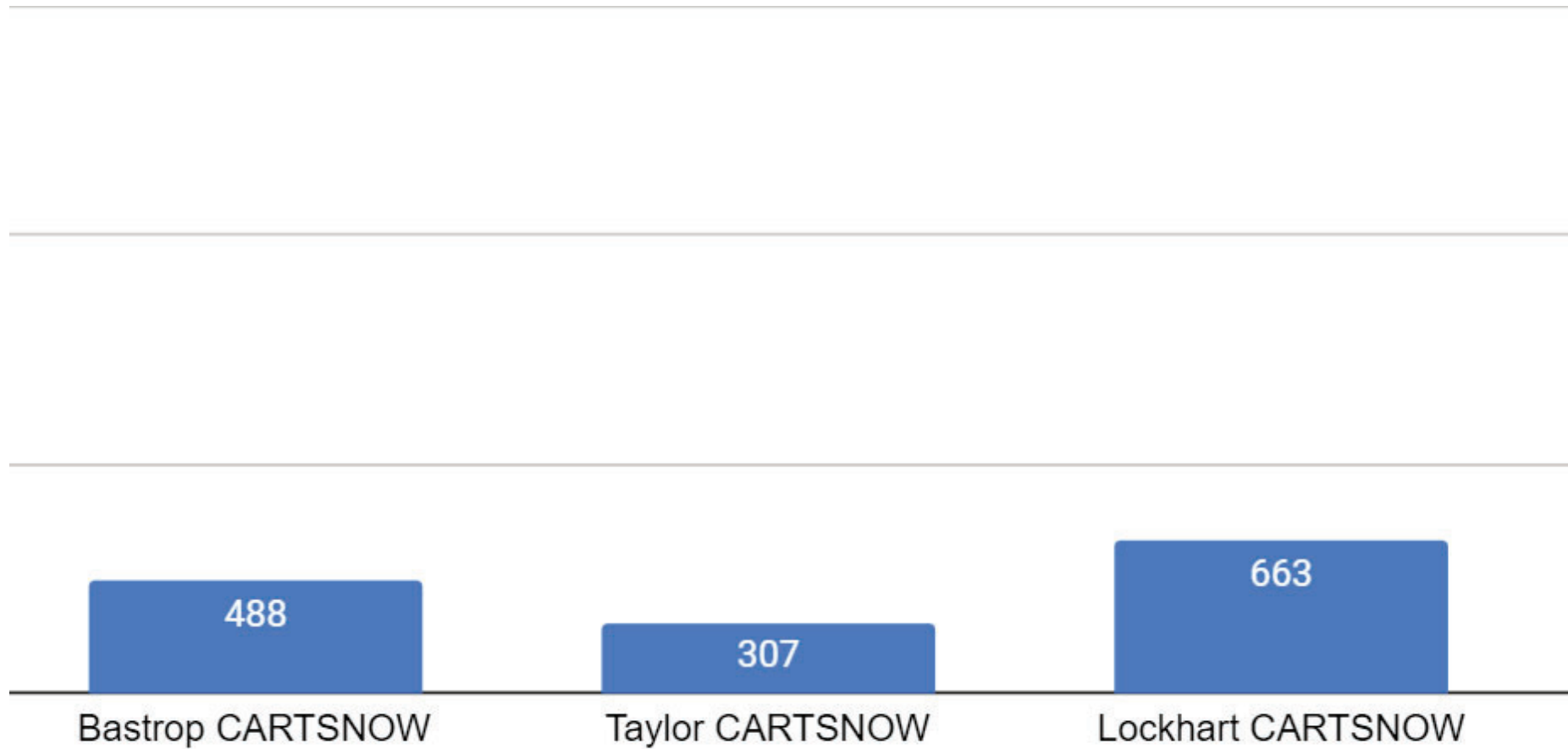


# Average daily ridership for September



■ Bastrop  
■ Taylor  
■ Lockhart

# Ridership for October 3-7





# Review of CARTS Microtransit Pilot Project



Technical Memorandum No. 2:

## ***Service Planning and Implementation of Microtransit Pilot Project***

*August 2022*



Prepared for:  
Bethesda, MD | Austin, TX TxDOT and CARTS

# Technical Memorandum No. 2: Service Planning and Implementation of Microtransit

## Introduction

This memorandum examines how CARTS Now, an on-demand microtransit service, was planned, developed, and implemented in Bastrop, Texas. This study includes an analysis of outreach, coalition building, securement of funding as well as planning and implementation activities.

The memorandum that follows is a product of meetings and interviews with the Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS) management team, dispatchers, and drivers that work with the existing service. These interviews and other information provided by CARTS staff, were used to complete this task. Additional information related to the early development and initial startup of the new service in the City of Bastrop includes the *CARTS Now Bastrop Community Outreach Report, Updated April 14, 2021*, a concept paper on *Improving Health Outcomes in Bastrop County via Improved Transit Access (CARTS)*, and local news articles, which can be found in Appendix 2-A. These interviews and information will also be used in the review of lessons learned in Task No. 4.

Overall, this technical memorandum should be treated as a draft document, and revisions and additions will be incorporated into a version that will ultimately be included as a chapter in the guidebook.

## Planning

In January 2021, CARTS Now began to provide rides between any two locations in the City of Bastrop within 15 minutes of booking. CARTS Now operates in an extended service area that includes the entire Bastrop City Limits. This section will explore the planning components related to the successful launch of this innovative, on-demand microtransit service pilot.

## Background

The initial idea to pilot an on-demand microtransit service for the City of Bastrop was formed as a result of CARTS experience piloting (2017-2018) and then launching an on-demand ride microtransit service in a suburb of the City of Austin, Texas. In June 2019, in partnership with Austin's Capital Metro and the Travis County Transportation and Natural Resources (TNR) department, CARTS launched a Capital Metro microtransit (Manor Pickup) project in Manor, Texas (population 14,708). The new service, Manor Pickup,

replaced an unproductive flex route operating in the community. Capital Metro and CARTS continue to provide the on-demand microtransit service in the City of Manor. This early contractual partnership with Capital Metro gave CARTS an opportunity to become familiar with operating an on-demand microtransit system and with the use of an app to schedule rides without the need for a call center. Customers were able to schedule rides from their smart phones by using an app or calling the service center. The app used for Manor Pickup service was developed in partnership with an on-demand public mobility developer, Via, which licenses its technology to transportation providers globally.

Manor Pickup was such a success, with ridership increasing over 300 percent, that CARTS management began to develop a plan to provide a similar service for other cities in the CARTS service area, including the City of Bastrop.

## Development

CARTS operation of the Manor Pickup service for Capital Metro was ongoing during the development of the Bastrop pilot. Their continued experience running the Manor Pickup system, made CARTS uniquely positioned to pilot an on-demand microtransit ride service in the CARTS service area, including the City of Bastrop.

In 2018, CARTS management was invited to participate in a focus group organized by [Bastrop County Cares \(BCC\)](#). BCC is a local non-profit organization and county-wide partnership whose initiatives include improving health outcomes in Bastrop County. BCC lists as partners and sponsors a wide variety of non-profit social support agencies and initiatives, including the [St. David's Foundation](#) and the [Hogg Foundation for Mental Health](#). After the meeting, CARTS leadership began work on a plan that would improve access to health care in Bastrop and perhaps other rural areas in CARTS service area. BCC took on the task of establishing a county-wide consortium of health care providers who could assist in ensuring that the new service met the needs of their patients. As a result of their collaboration and participation in the BCC organization, CARTS produced a concept paper "Improving Health Outcomes in Bastrop County via Improved Transit Access." (Appendix 2-A).

In November 2018, with the encouragement and support of BCC and the St. David's Foundation, along with local governments and affiliated healthcare facilities, CARTS filed a proposal for an FTA grant to implement microtransit service for Bastrop County. While that proposal did not result in an award, the concept and underlying needs for a new type of service were validated.

In September 2020, with the continued support of the community, CARTS again partnered with BCC to respond to a Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Call for Pilot Projects with a request for the funding of four microtransit projects to serve cities within the CARTS service area. TxDOT awarded funding for only one pilot and CARTS chose Bastrop.

According to CARTS management, the agency had been preparing for the launch of the Bastrop pilot since their initial launch of the Manor Pickup service in June 2019. By 2020, CARTS had an ongoing relationship with Via, the software vendor, and already had an agreement in place with VIA for the project. In addition, CARTS was already collaborating with the Bastrop's city manager on a joint vision



of mobility improvements in the city and associated improvements planned for the downtown streetscape as well as a new citywide tourism campaign.

CARTS also had the opportunity to participate in a successful Department of Energy (DOE) grant to the Lone Star Clean Fuels Alliance (CFA) for low speed, electric vehicle cabs. The grant was meant to introduce electric taxis to Bastrop and the timing was perfect. CARTS was able to incorporate the addition of an Electric Cab of North America (eCab) service in downtown Bastrop with the launch of the new CARTS Now service. As part of a previously planned renovation, the CARTS Bastrop station was outfitted to function as a charging station and hub for the electric vehicles.

It was determined that the service needed vehicles that could go on the highway (65 MPH) and frontage roads (45 MPH). CARTS turned to RAM Promaster vans. These are low floor, ramp equipped vans with a capacity of 8 – 10 passengers with two wheelchair positions. CARTS is happy with these vehicles.

CARTS contracted with CD&P, a local public engagement firm based in Austin, Texas, to help with securing much needed public support and understanding of the new system. CD&P staff worked with the CARTS team to develop a list of businesses and medical providers in the Bastrop area who could be enlisted to share news of the service within their own social networks.

CARTS also contracted with a local design firm to assist with branding the new on-demand microtransit service. CARTS Now was chosen as the name for the new service and a bold, red color scheme was chosen for the vehicles, the app, and other marketing materials.

The new service was designed to provide trips within Bastrop city limits, Monday through Friday, from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Using the app, riders could request trips at any time during service hours to book a ride within 15 minutes of their request. Customers without access to a smartphone, could call a CARTS phone line to arrange a ride.

## Funding

In September 2020, CARTS responded to a Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Call for Pilot Projects with a request for the funding of four microtransit projects to serve cities within the CARTS service area. CARTS received funds for only one pilot and chose the City of Bastrop to be their first on-demand microtransit pilot. In choosing the City of Bastrop, the CARTS team knew that the project would have the support of BCC and likely the support of local leadership. With its consortium of local health care providers, BCC was already primed to assist with making the project a success. Also, ridership on the existing flex route had plateaued at only two trips per hour.

It is also important to note here that CARTS had been preparing for the launch of an on-demand microtransit pilot in the City of Bastrop since the launch of the Manor Pickup service in the summer of 2019. To ensure that the CARTS Now pilot in Bastrop would launch on the same timeline as other planned local commitments and initiatives that were complementary to the pilot project, the agency committed assets early on to fund those activities necessary to launch the pilot: agreement with Via for software, vehicles for the service, and arrangements for the branding, marketing and public information.

As anticipated, the City of Bastrop had a positive response to the idea of on-demand microtransit. With support from Bastrop's City Manager and City Council, the city continues to contribute between \$40–\$50,000 in match money through an interlocal agreement each year. The city also provides a prime downtown half-block of restricted parking for a mobility hub and paid for the improvements, including installing the shelter.

## Outreach and Coalition Building

The CARTS Now outreach team led by the General Manager and Community Outreach Director began to implement their community outreach strategy in November 2020. To promote ridership and delivery of a successful pilot program, emphasis was placed on building coalitions with local leaders, businesses, medical and social service providers, and other community organizations to raise awareness and support for the new service.

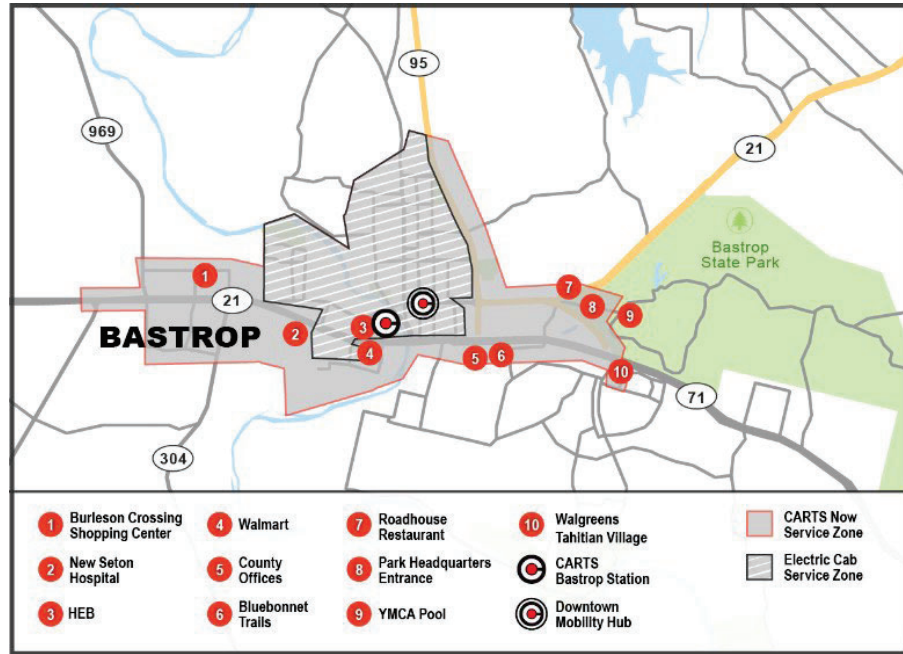
CARTS returned to BCC in 2021 to provide an update and overview of the new service. In addition to working with BCC to enlist medical and social service providers as partners in promoting the program, the CARTS team met with city officials and local business leaders to ensure support and active engagement at start up.

The CARTS Now outreach team conducted two days of in-person visits to more than sixty local businesses and service providers. In addition to providing information and answering questions about the new, on-demand service, the outreach team shared general information about CARTS services and provided printed material and contact information to encourage future interaction. Visits were conducted on December 15, 2020, and January 21, 2021.

## Presentations and Focus Groups

On, November 10, 2020, the CARTS Now team began their outreach campaign with a presentation to the Bastrop City Council. The presentation included an overview of the new service and the proposed outreach plan to distribute information to the greater Bastrop Community.

**Figure 2-1: User-Friendly Map of Service Area**



A user-friendly map of the service area (Figure 2-1) was developed in English and Spanish to share with community members.

Prior to launching the new services and as a part of the overall coalition building effort, the CARTS Now team joined forces with Bastrop County Cares (BCC) to help ensure that local health care providers were on board with the new service. BCC helped identify medical service providers to participate in an online focus group session to provide input on proposed outreach strategies and materials. Highlights from the meeting were published in *CARTS Now Bastrop Community Outreach Report* and are listed below:

#### Medical Focus Group Input Highlights:

- Lack of reliable transportation contributes to many missed appointments.
- CARTS Now materials need to be simple and easy to understand.
- Signs, posters, and fact sheets are preferred materials.
  - Can be placed around town and given to medical care facilities to put up in their offices and waiting rooms.

- Many medical offices are using no-touch materials like laminated posters with QR codes.
- Clinics often have televisions in waiting rooms where they can show videos or presentations.
- Expressed interest in potential contracts or voucher systems for patients using CARTS Now.
- Patients are increasingly receiving information through text message alerts. Texts with links would be convenient.
- Identified the need to reach demographics without smart phones through grassroots outreach and printed materials.

In addition to providing insight into the transit related needs of their patients, members of the health care focus group and BCC agreed to assist CARTS by providing a “navigator” or liaison at each clinic who would work with patients to help explain the new CARTS Now transit service.

#### Outreach Materials

The CARTS Now team developed a variety of informative and easy-to-use materials to help users navigate the service and assist medical and service providers with coordinating rides for clients. Wherever possible, materials were provided in English and Spanish. QR codes were also used to assist users in downloading the CARTS now app. Materials were distributed electronically and in person through business visits. Outreach materials can be found in Appendix 2-B. These included:

- A CARTS Now webpage on the CARTS website with additional resources for riders
- CARTS Now flyers and posters to explain the service and provide links to the website and app
- FAQs to help explain how to request a ride, pricing and discount availability, and how to use the CARTS Now app
- Grab-and-go business cards with the CARTS Now phone line and QR code for easy access to the app
- eCab informational flyer describing how eCabs work, environmental benefits, and how to request an eCab ride
- [A Promotional video](#) with the Mayor of Bastrop explaining the benefits of the service and how to ride



## Social Media and Media Coordination<sup>i</sup>

**Media and Media Coordination:** The CARTS Now team used a series of Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter campaigns to help promote the service. Posts were consistently shared throughout the initiative on CARTS accounts, as well as through community partners who shared messages about the service.

**Social Media Contests:** The CARTS Now team developed two promotional contests during the program asking community members to share photos of their CARTS Now ride for a chance to win a gift card to a local business.

**Media Coverage:** CARTS developed a media release to share with local news outlets in November 2020 announcing the service, along with additional CARTS initiatives and potential future expansions to other rural areas. The story was picked up by several outlets, some of which published multiple articles throughout the program to report on progress and additional CARTS news.

## Implementation

The new CARTS service, CARTS Now Bastrop, began to receive requests and pick up its first riders in January 2021. By partnering with local officials, businesses, and service agencies, the CARTS Now team created opportunities to inform and create excitement about the new and innovative, on-demand, curb-to-curb ride hailing service among a broad spectrum of the Bastrop community.

Electric Cab of North America (eCab) began to provide rides in Bastrop on December 14, 2020, prior to the launch of CARTS Now van services on January 11, 2021. In step with their early coalition building efforts, CARTS partnered with local leaders, the Bastrop Chamber of Commerce, and Visit Bastrop to host the promotion events described below:

- Kick-Off - On December 15, 2020, during the first week of the eCab operations, the CARTS Now team hosted a CARTS Now Kick-Off event. Local leaders, including Bastrop's Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem, were invited to take an inaugural ride from City Hall to downtown Bastrop in the new eCab vehicles. The new CARTS Now vans and eCabs also visited local health clinics to record healthcare providers using the service and sharing their experience.
- Bastrop Station Ribbon Cutting and Full-Service Launch - On January 21, 2021, CARTS hosted a ribbon-cutting event to celebrate the grand opening of the new CARTS Bastrop station and announce the full launch of the new CARTS Now on-demand service. Partners from the Chamber of Commerce were asked to share their thoughts about the new ride service.

## Summary Planning, Outreach, and Implementation

- Previous experience
  - Successful launch of a microtransit project in Manor, Texas pursuant to a contractual obligation with the Capital Metropolitan Transit Authority in Austin, Texas
  - Via software package, built the application

- Coalition building
  - Emphasis on building coalitions with local leaders, businesses, medical and social service providers, and other community organizations to raise awareness and support for the new service
    - Steady progression of collaboration in the development of the concept of microtransit to address local mobility
    - Ongoing partnership with BCC to reinforce transit relationships with health care providers
  - Continued interaction with all stakeholders based on their relationship to the project, i.e., city officials on geo-fencing, human service representatives on client needs
- Outreach
  - Materials distributed electronically and in person through business visits
  - Materials designed to help users and those coordinating rides for others
  - Social Media and Media Coordination
    - Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter campaigns to help promote the service
    - Promotional contests
    - Media releases to share with local news outlets
    - Participation of Community Leaders in promotions
- Planning
  - Long planning period – CARTS began planning in the summer of 2019
  - Openness to alignment with other community initiatives that complemented and enhanced the pilot project
    - City of Bastrop mobility improvements
    - eCabs to complement CARTS city-wide service
- Funding
  - Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Call for Pilot Projects
  - Committed assets early to activities necessary to launch the pilot: i.e., software, vehicles, and marketing
  - Matching funds from City of Bastrop
- Implementation
  - Successful launch of CARTS Now with eCAB services in January 2021
  - Collaboration with local leaders and partners at kick-off and grand opening public events
  - On-demand microtransit provides a higher level of service
    - Better meets the needs of human service clients and medical facilities
    - A more responsive option to the general public
    - Broadens the market for CARTS services by attracting new customers
    - Opportunities to better serve the outlying areas with freed up resources

# CARTS Now Bastrop Community Outreach Report

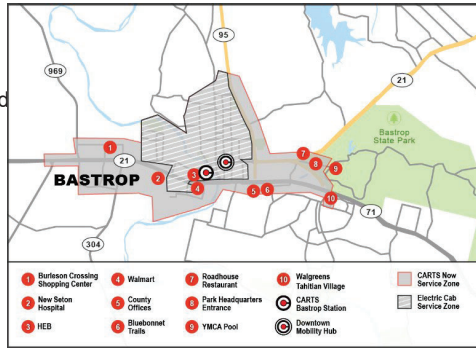


## Program Overview

In January 2021, the Capital Area Rural Transportation Service (CARTS) launched the CARTS Now pilot service in Bastrop, an innovative on-demand microtransit solution providing rides between any two locations in the City of Bastrop within 15 minutes of booking.

CARTS Now consists of a free electric cab service, operating within a limited service zone in the downtown area, and a low-cost van service, operating in an extended service area that includes the entire Bastrop City Limits.

To promote ridership and deliver a successful pilot program, CARTS implemented a community outreach strategy beginning in November 2020 to build awareness and support for the initiative, enlist medical and social service providers as partners in promoting the program, and distribute information to the greater Bastrop Community.

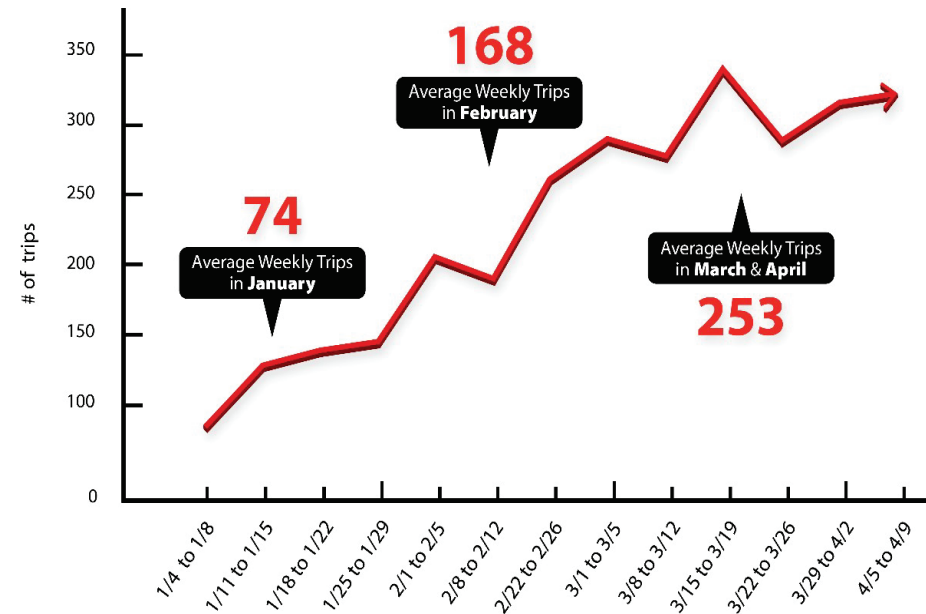


A user-friendly map of the service area was developed in English and Spanish to share with community members

## Results

The service launched on January 11, 2021 with support from local leadership, service providers, and community members. Outreach strategies facilitated broad distribution of materials through a combination of grassroots outreach and partnerships with **100+ community organizations** who have committed to sharing printed and electronic materials with clients, customers, and constituents. **Usage of the service has increased throughout the program**, and local businesses, medical clinics, and other service providers have expressed appreciation for the service that addresses a crucial need for the community.

Weekly Trips through April 9, 2021\*



\*This figure excludes the week of 2/14 to 2/20, when services were interrupted due to the winter storm.



## Outreach Strategies and Tools

### Presentations and Focus Groups

The CARTS Now team kicked off the outreach process by presenting an overview of the service and proposed outreach to the Bastrop City Council on November 10, 2021 to provide updates on CARTS initiatives and introduce the CARTS Now service prior to its launch.

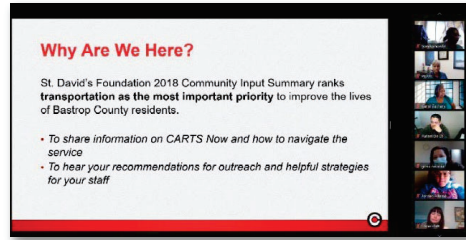
Prior to the service launch, the team also coordinated with Bastrop County Cares (BCC) to identify medical service providers to participate in an online focus group session on to provide input on proposed outreach strategies and materials.

#### Focus Group Input Highlights:

- **Lack of reliable transportation** contributes to many missed appointments.
- CARTS Now materials need to be **simple and easy to understand**.
- **Signs, posters, and fact sheets** are preferred materials.
  - Can be placed around town and given to medical care facilities to put up in their offices and waiting rooms.
  - Many medical offices are using **no-touch materials** like laminated posters with QR codes.
  - Clinics often have **televisions in waiting rooms** where they can show videos or presentations.
- Expressed interest in **potential contracts or voucher systems** for patients using CARTS Now.
- Patients are increasingly receiving information through text message alerts. **Texts with links** would be convenient.
- Identified the need to reach **demographics without smart phones through grassroots outreach** and printed materials.

#### Participating Organizations:

- |   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| • Bluebonnet Trails                               | • Fresenius Dialysis              |
| • St. David's Foundation                          | • Veteran's Services              |
| • Community Health Centers of South Central Texas | • Methodist Health Care           |
| • Ascension Seton                                 | • Wesley Nurses                   |
| • Any Baby Can                                    | • Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas |
| • Lone Star Circle of Care                        | • FastMed                         |



*Focus group began with a brief presentation and primarily focused on collaborative discussion with medical providers*

### Outreach Materials

The CARTS team developed a variety of informative and easy-to-use materials to help users navigate the service and assist medical and service providers with coordinating rides for clients. Wherever possible, materials were provided in English and Spanish and included QR codes were used to conveniently direct users to download the app. Materials distributed electronically and in person through business visits included:

- **CARTS Now FAQs** explaining how the service works, pricing and discount availability, and how to use the app
- **Project webpage on the CARTS website** including FAQs and additional resources for service users
- **Grab-and-go business cards** with CARTS Now phone line and QR code linking to app
- **Flyers and posters** explaining the service and linking to the website and app downloads
- **eCab informational flyer** describing how eCabs work, environmental benefits, and how to request an eCab ride
- **Promotional video** explaining the benefits of the service and how to ride



*The CARTS Now team coordinated with Mayor Connie Schroeder, Mayor Pro-Tem Lyle Nelson, and medical providers in the area to create a video promoting the service.*

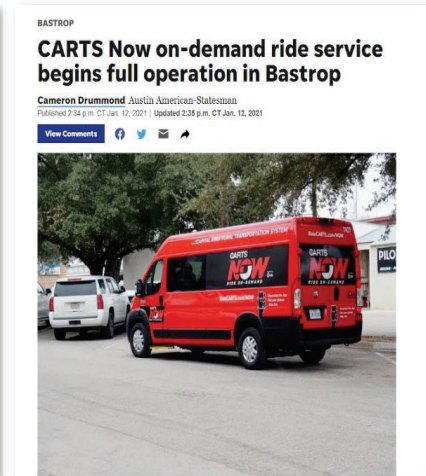
Social Media and Media Coordination

The CARTS Now team used a series of Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter campaigns to help promote the service. Posts were consistently shared throughout the initiative on CARTS accounts, as well as through community partners who shared messages about the service.

Social Media Contests

The CARTS Now team developed two promotional contests during the program asking community members to share photos of their CARTS Now ride for a chance to win a gift card to a local business.

- The #ILoveCARTSNow Valentine's Day themed contest launched in early February with a \$25 HEB gift card incentive.
- A second #RideCARTSNow promotional contest launched in March and was made possible through a partnership with Film Alley in Bastrop. Film Alley contributed two free movie tickets and a free appetizer to offer as an incentive.



Media Coverage

CARTS developed a media release to share with local news outlets in November 2021 announcing the service, along with additional CARTS initiatives and potential future expansions to other rural areas. The story was picked up by several outlets, some of which published multiple articles throughout the program to report on progress and additional CARTS news.

Publication	Date(s)
Austin American Statesman	November 23, 2020; December 17, 2020; January 11, 2021
KXAN	January 11, 2021
Elgin Courier	December 15, 2020

Business Visits

To help spread the word and distribute materials in the Bastrop community, the outreach team conducted two days of in-person visits to 60+ local businesses and service providers in the area. The outreach team shared information about CARTs services, helped answer questions about the new on-demand options, and provided printed flyers, business cards, and brochures.

Visits were conducted on December 15, 2020 and January 21, 2021

60+ Business Visits

30+ Businesses Contacted Via Phone and Email

Promotion Events

In addition to in-person visits, CARTs partnered with local leaders, the Bastrop Chamber of Commerce, and the Visit Bastrop to host two separate promotion events.

Kick Off Event

On December 15, 2020, during the first week of the e-cab operations, the team hosted a kick-off event to host Mayor Connie Shroeder and Mayor Pro Tem Lyle Nelson to take an inaugural ride in the new e-cab vehicles from City Hall to downtown Bastrop. The new vans and e-cabs also visited local service providers including Community Health Centers of South Central Texas and Lone Star Circle of Care to record healthcare providers using the service and sharing their experience.



Bastrop Station Ribbon Cutting and Full Service Launch

On January 21, 2021, CARTS hosted a ribbon-cutting event to celebrate the grand opening of the new CARTS Bastrop station and announce the full launch of the CARTS Now service. Local partners from the Chamber of Commerce shared opening remarks about benefits CARTS brings to the local community and their hopes for the service, followed by a brief introduction to the service and the new station features by Dave Marsh. Elected officials, such as Mayor Schroeder, also joined the event and toured the new facility.




Local Partnerships

By partnering with local officials, businesses, and service agencies, the team helped inform and create excitement among community members with broad reach across target audiences. Mayor Shroeder, City Council Members, and representatives from the local medical community have shared information about CARTs to their various networks and are eager to see the services continue to grow and thrive.

## Appendix 2-B: Materials Used in Outreach Campaign for CARTS Now Bastrop

The following are examples of materials used in the initial outreach campaign for CARTS Now Bastrop.


1. CARTS Now Business Card
2. CARTS Now Promo for the App (English and Spanish)
3. CARTS Now Rack Card (English and Spanish)
4. eCab Flyers for print and vertical (English and Spanish)
5. CARTS Now FAQ
6. Sandwich Board Sign



**CARTS  
NOW**  
RIDE ON-DEMAND



Your new way to get around  
*lickety-split.*

**RideCARTS.com/NOW**



**Ride today.**

- 1 Download the App
- 2 Set your pickup
- 3 Ride-On!



Scan to download the  
**CARTS Now app**

Or call **512-505-5666**  
to schedule your ride





Simplemente descargue el App. Ride-on demand.

TIEMPO LIMITADO!  
**GRATIS**

RECOMIENDE A UN AMIGO - VIAJE GRATIS!\*

\*Usted puede ganar viajes gratuitos cuando invite amigos y registren su viaje con CARTS Now. Para ver su código de invitación, presione FREE RIDES en el menú de el app. Cuando sus amigos registren usando el código que usted les sirvió, ellos recibirán su primer viaje gratis. Después que completen ese viaje, su próximo viaje será gratis. Esta oferta puede ser cancelada o alterada en cualquier momento por CARTS Now.

#### INFORMACION DE SERVICIO

CARTS Now se encuentra en Bastrop de Lunes a Viernes, 7am-7pm. Viaje a cualquier lugar dentro de la zona Bastrop. Vea el mapa abajo.



#### COMO VIAJAR

##### 1. Descargue el App

Consiga CARTS Now desde el App Store o Google Play en su telefono, smart phone. Siga los pasos para establecer su cuenta.\*

\*Si no tiene un smart phone, llame a 512.505.5666.

##### 2. Decida su Recogida

Ingrese las direcciones de su recogida y destino, y escoja su opcion de viaje.

##### 3. Listo!

Revise el app y camine una corta distancia a su lugar de recogida. Si tiene preguntas llame a 512.505.5666.



RideCARTS.com/NOW 512-505-5666



Simply download the App. Ride-on demand.

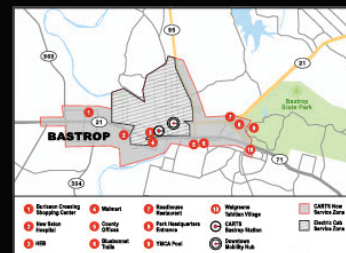
LIMITED TIME!  
**FREE**

REFER A FRIEND - RIDE FOR FREE!\*

\*Earn free rides by inviting friends to sign up and ride with CARTS Now. Find your invite code - tap FREE RIDES in the app menu. When a friend signs up with your invite code, they'll receive a free first ride. After they've completed a first ride, your next ride will be free. This offer may be revoked or altered at any time by CARTS Now.

#### SERVICE INFO

CARTS Now is in Bastrop Mon-Fri, 7am-7pm. Ride anywhere within the Bastrop Zone Map.



#### HOW TO RIDE

##### 1. Download The App

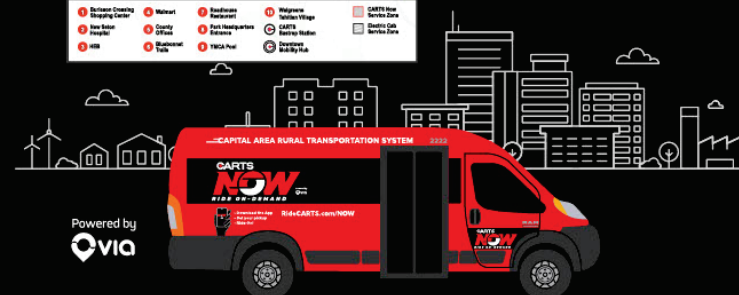
Get CARTS Now from the App Store or Google Play on your smart phone. Follow the simple steps to set up your account. \*If you do not have a smart phone, call 512-505-5666.

##### 2. Set Your Pickup

Enter your pickup and dropoff addresses and choose your ride option.

##### 3. Ride-On!

Check the app and walk a short distance to your pickup spot. Call 512-505-5666 if you have questions.



RideCARTS.com/NOW 512-505-5666





## CÓMO MONTAR y seguir tu camino *lickety-split*.

1. **BUSCAR**  
CARTS Now en  
la App Store  
de su teléfono.
2. **DESCARGAR**  
el CARTS Now  
App.
3. **REGISTRARSE**  
ingrese la  
información de  
su tarjeta de crédito  
o débito.



- Descargue el App
- Decida su Recogida
- Listo!



Powered by  
**VIA**

RideCARTS.com/NOW 512-505-5666



## HOW TO RIDE and be on your way *lickety-split*.

1. **SEARCH**  
CARTS Now  
on your phone  
App Store.
2. **DOWNLOAD**  
the  
CARTS Now  
App.
3. **SIGN-UP**  
enter your credit  
or debit card  
information.



- Download the App
- Set your pickup
- Ride-On!



Powered by  
**VIA**

RideCARTS.com/NOW 512-505-5666



Your new way to get  
around *lickety-split*.



Curb-to-curb rides Monday – Friday  
7 a.m. – 7 p.m.



RideCARTS.com/NOW • 512-505-5666

# Frequently asked Questions

## Overview:

The Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS) is a public transportation service offering low-cost rides in and around non-urbanized areas across nine counties in Central Texas.

CARTS has multiple services, including CARTS *Now*: a curb to curb, on demand service now offered in a limited-service area within the cities of Bastrop, Lockhart, and Taylor, with service in Marble Falls beginning in October.

## What is CARTS *Now*?

CARTS *Now* is a low-cost, on-demand ride service that allows the citizens of Bastrop, Lockhart, Taylor, and Marble Falls to get from point A to point B on their own time.

CARTS *Now* has no predetermined routes or schedules, and rides are available **within 15 minutes** of scheduling. This service provides curb-to-curb transportation between any two points within the service area, meaning users can request a ride from anywhere in the city, meet their driver at a nearby curb or corner, and be dropped off at a curb or corner near their destination. The service is not limited to trips that bring riders to and from CARTS stations or transit stops.

## How does it work?

Riders can book a CARTS *Now* ride two ways:

1. Download the **CARTS *Now* App**
2. Call **(512) 502-5666**

After setting your pick-up location and destination, you will be assigned a ride. After confirming your ride, your vehicle will arrive within 15 minutes and take you to your destination.

## What are the hours of operation?

Service hours are Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. with no predetermined routes or schedules.

## Does the rider need to schedule the ride ahead of time?

No, users can request a ride any time during service hours and a vehicle will arrive within 15 minutes.

## How do you pay?

Riders can pay with exact cash, via phone or can connect a credit card to pay in the app.



# Frequently asked Questions?

- **What is the cost per ride?**
  - Rides are \$2 each way, with discounts available. In Marble Falls, CARTS *Now* will be free for a limited time after the launch on September 6<sup>th</sup>.
  - Rides are free for Veterans for medical trips and are discounted to half rates for seniors 65 and older, persons with disabilities and children under 12.
- **Will the app be available in Spanish?**
  - TBD
- **Does Medicaid pay for CARTS *Now* rides?**
  - Currently, Medicaid is not a payor for CARTS *Now* rides. However, Medicaid patients may still utilize the service and pay the regular rate. For parents traveling to appointments with children, CARTS *Now* may be a better solution than scheduling a ride through Medicaid, given that Medicaid only provides payment for one guardian and one child. A family traveling with children can utilize the CARTS *Now* service without limits.
- **Can medical providers provide vouchers for their patients to ride CARTS *Now*?**
  - Medical providers who are interested in purchasing rides for their patients, may pay CARTS *Now* directly or contact [Pearl@RideCARTS.com](mailto:Pearl@RideCARTS.com) to inquire about purchasing vouchers in advance.
- **Can passengers bring car seats?**
  - As a public transit service, CARTS is exempt from requiring car seats on their buses; however, passengers may choose to bring a car seat and install it for the duration of the ride. Car seats must be taken with passengers at their destination and may not be left on the bus.
- **How can I help a client who is trying to access an appointment outside of the City of Bastrop?** In addition to the CARTS *Now* services in the City of Bastrop, CARTS offers a variety of ride options to connect into urban and non-urban areas in the 9-county Central Texas service area. To schedule a connecting ride into Austin or other locations, call CARTS at (512) 478 - RIDE (7433) or visit [www.ridecarts.com](http://www.ridecarts.com) to inquire about connections.





# What Vehicles are used for Rides?

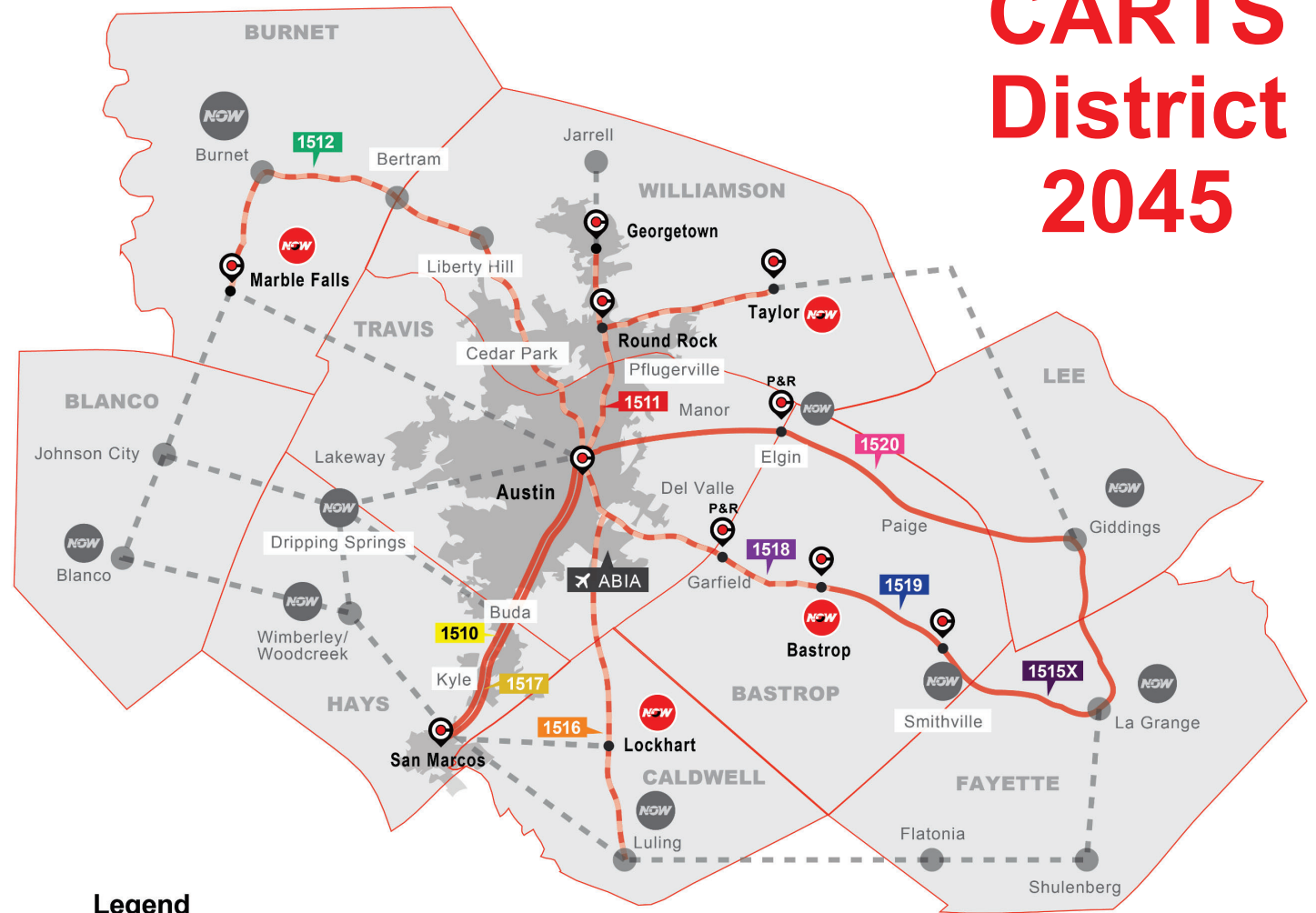
- Riders will hop into a bright red CARTS Now van. All vans are wheelchair accessible. Bike racks are being mounted on the CARTS NOW fleet as well.



How does microtransit fit into your overall system service delivery plans?

Introduce CARTS NOW microtransit to more cities throughout the CARTS District as determined by the TDP and outreach efforts.

# CARTS District 2045



## Legend



**CARTS Stations**  
(National Intercity Connections)

**P&R** Planned park & ride improvements



**Existing Routes**

Planned express bus service



Existing stops



**Existing CARTS Now Service**



**Planned CARTS Now Service**



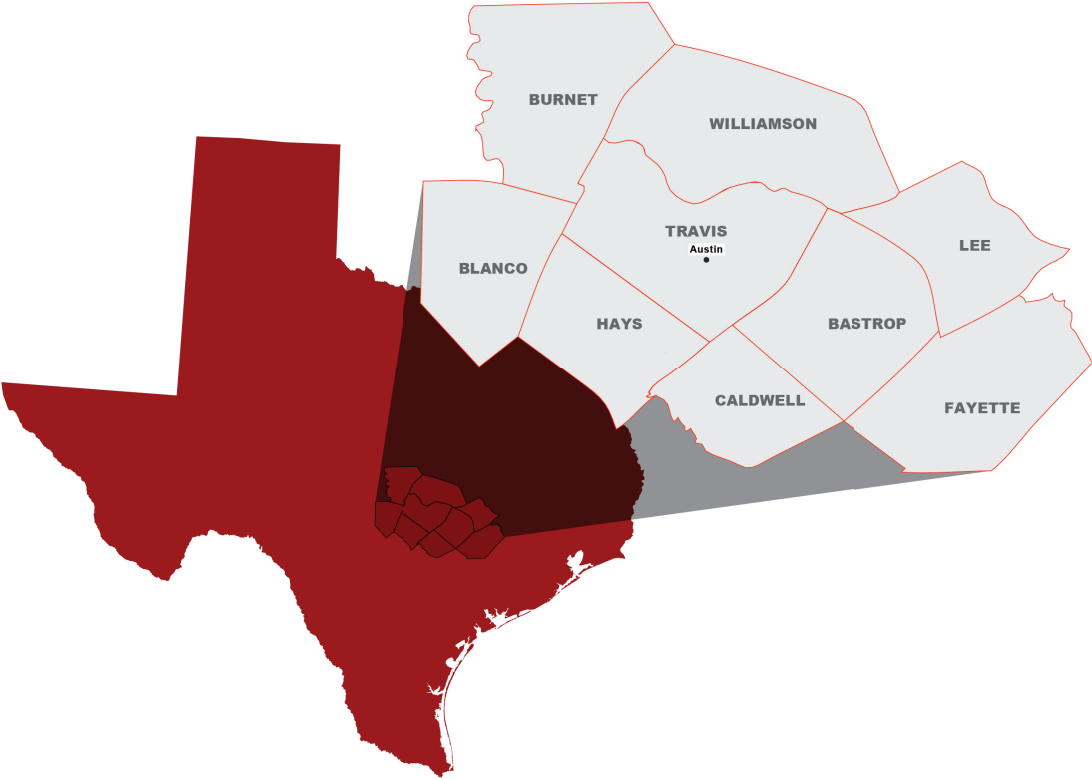
**Planned CARTS Stations**



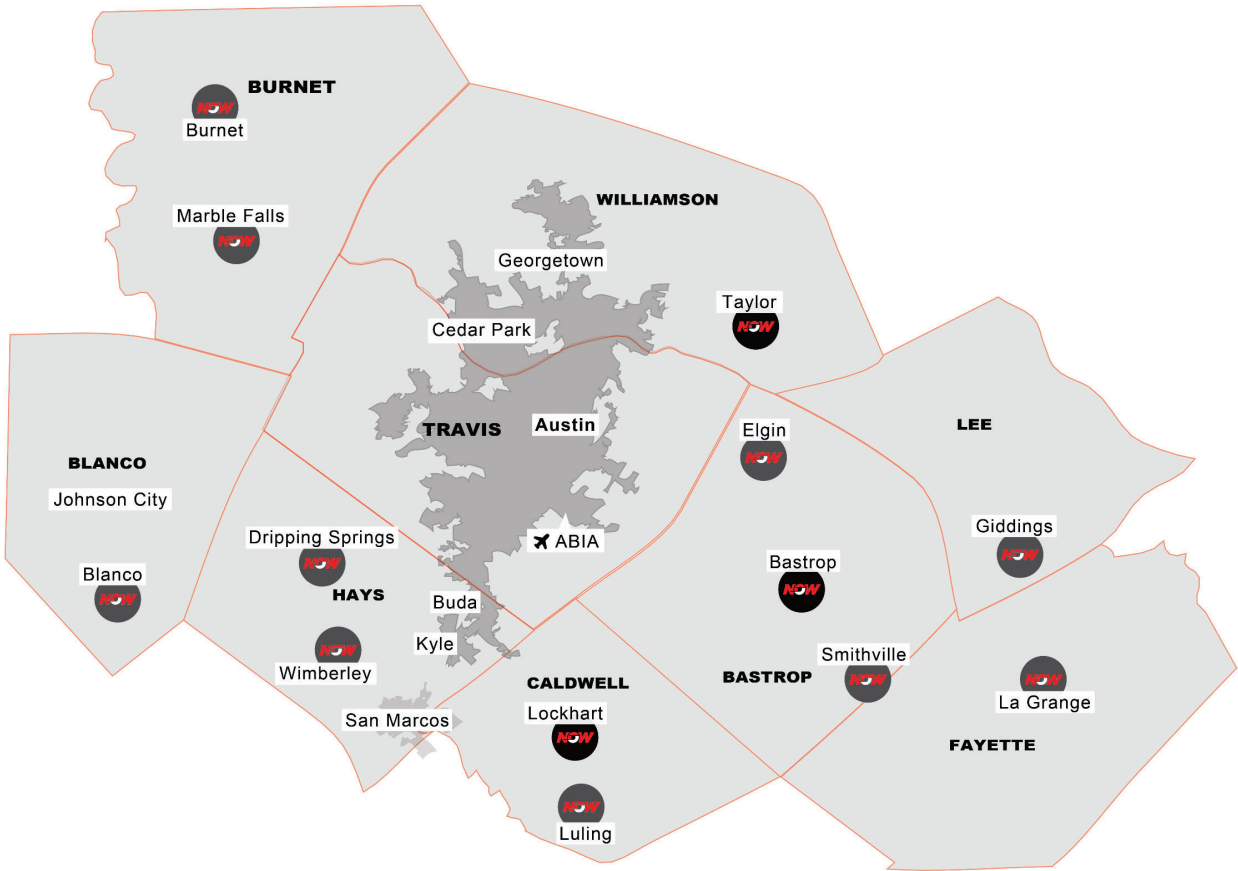
**Planned Express Bus Routes**



# Microtransit Conceptual Plan



## CARTS District Microtransit Conceptual Plan



### Legend



**CARTS Now Service**  
(Existing)



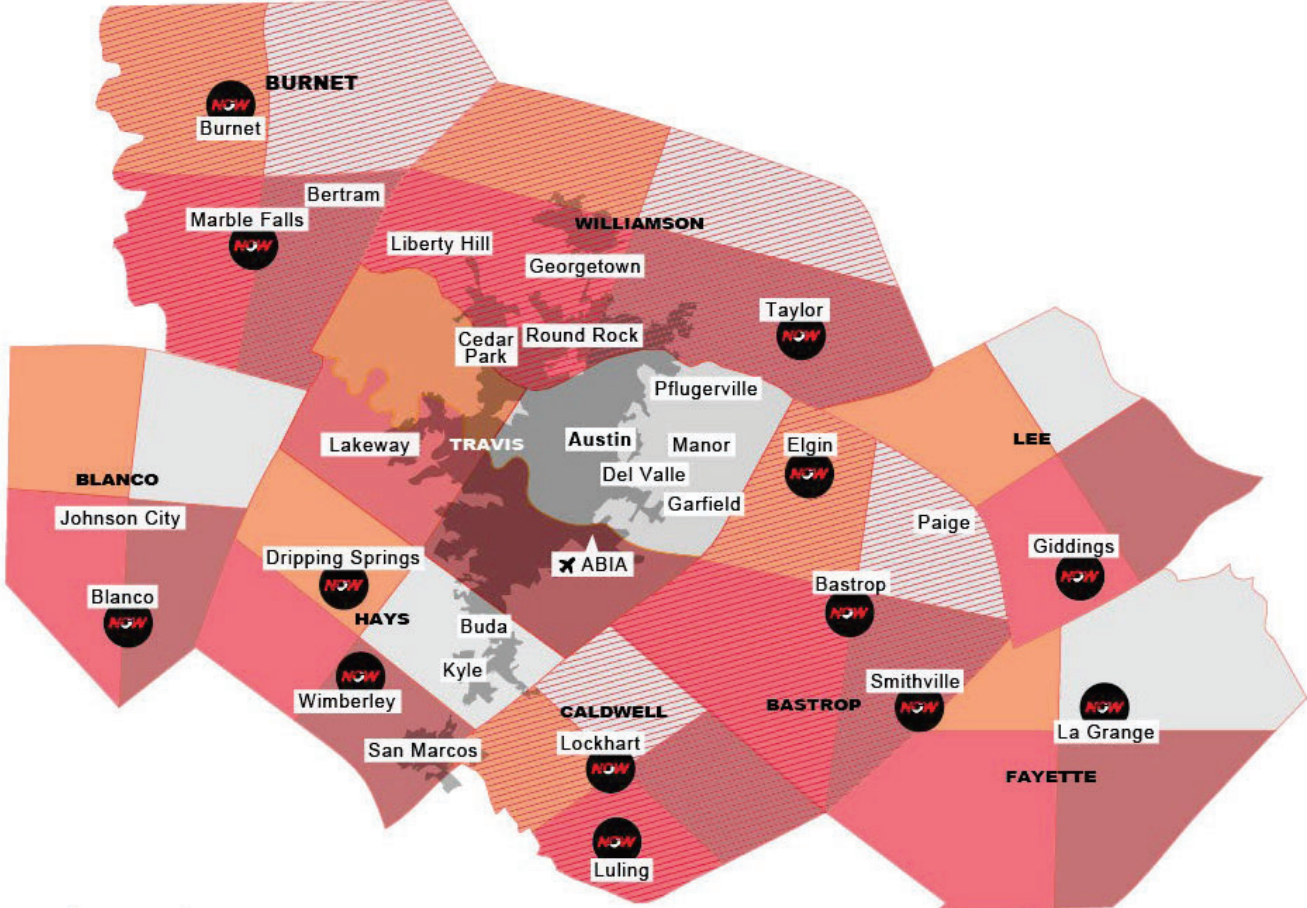
**CARTS Now Service**  
(Planned)



**Urban Service Area**  
(Grasshopper, Austin CapMetro, San Marcos The Bus)

# CARTS District

## Microtransit & Country Bus Conceptual Plan



### Legend

-  Country Bus Service Area
-  Country Bus Service Area
-  Country Bus Service Area
-  Country Bus Service Area
-  2022 Coordinated Call Candidate Location
-  **CARTS Now Service**  
(National Intercity Connections)
-  **Urban Service Area**  
(Grasshopper, Austin CapMetro, San Marcos The Bus)





# Stay in Touch

• Email us: [Dave@RideCARTS.com](mailto:Dave@RideCARTS.com)

• Phone: **512-505-5678**

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# Today's presenters



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Dana Platt  
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*Capital Area Rural Transportation System*



# Upcoming events for you

**October 26 at 11:30am EST**

TRB Webinar: New Transit Fare  
Policy—Capping and “Cashless”  
Collection

**December 12 at 1:00pm EST**

TRB Webinar: Expanding  
Microtransit Services and Improving  
the Rider Experience

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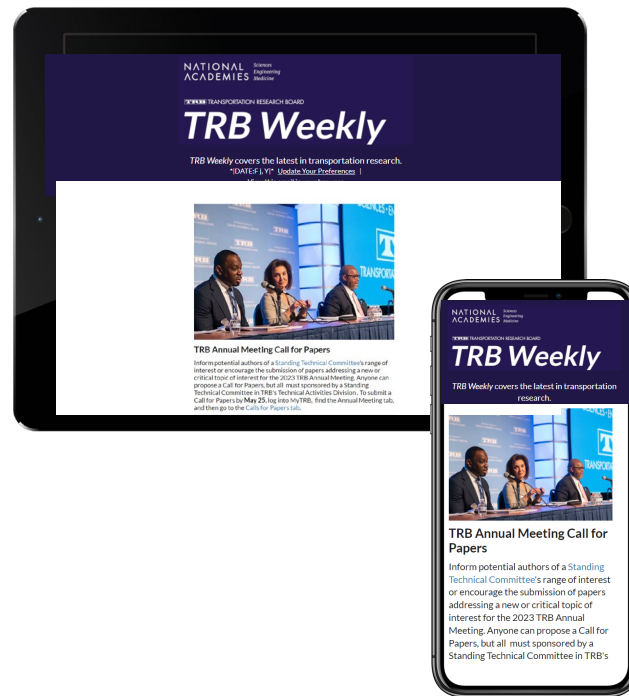
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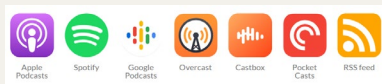
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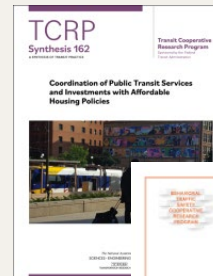
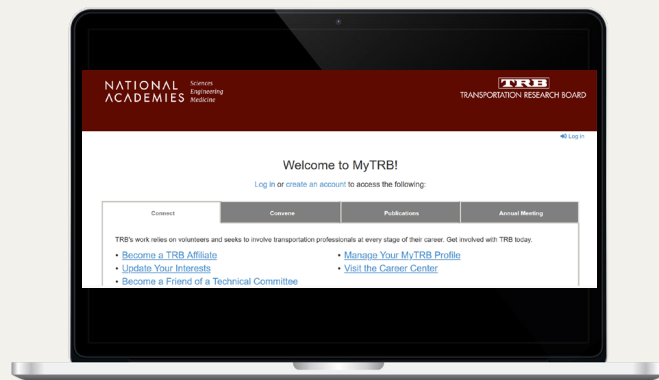
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