

Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

DATE February 21, 2020

TO Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

SUBJECT **Agenda Item #19-1186, Agenda Date February 26, 2020 – Authorize a two year and two month Interlocal Agreement between the City of Dallas and Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) to implement the Senior Medical Transportation Program (SMTP) using DART’s Transportation Assistance Program, known as the DART Rides Program**

The following Office of Community Care (OCC) item will be considered on the February 26, 2020 Agenda:

Item Number 19-1186: Authorize an Interlocal Agreement between the City of Dallas and Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) to implement the Senior Medical Transportation Program utilizing DART's Transportation Assistance Program, known as the DART Rides Program in an amount not to exceed \$674,458.18 for the period February 26, 2020 through April 30, 2022, with matching funds to be provided through a grant from the North Central Texas Council of Governments for the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program to provide transportation services throughout Dallas County for low-to-moderate income seniors aged 65 and above, enabling them to access medical, health and wellness services - Not to exceed \$674,458.18 - Financing: North Central Texas Council of Governments Grant Funds (\$337,229.09) and General Fund (\$337,229.09) (subject to annual appropriations)

Program History

The City of Dallas Senior Medical Transportation Program (SMTP) seeks to support seniors who reside within the City of Dallas in accessing transportation services to and from scheduled medical appointments and other health and wellness programs. Prior to March 2017, the program was implemented using City staff and vehicles, with a high cost per rides. In March of 2017, the City contracted with a transportation services provider, Real Time Transportation, Inc., to provide the service. This transition reduced the direct cost per ride, however City staff was still required to handle client eligibility screening and scheduling, which required substantial staff time and resources.

Review of Operations

At the request of Council, in 2018 staff began a process to review the program operations and determine a path forward. This included a review of program procedures and policies, a review of the eligibility criteria, conversations to improve coordination with other provider, including DART, and caseworkers contacting each participant listed on the program roster to complete individualized needs assessments. Through this process numerous operational issues were identified.

- Program of last resort – SMTP was established to serve as a last resort for seniors to ensure their ability to attend health and wellness appointments, however through a review of the client intake process it was determined that the program was not adequately screening clients for eligibility for other programs nor coordinating appropriately with other transportation providers.

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- Service duplication – An initial screening of clients determined that as many as 200 were already eligible for the DART Paratransit program, and that many others were eligible for other services that were already available.
- Paratransit Screening – Through conversations with clients, it was determined that many had never completed the Paratransit application process. This process can take up to 21 days and includes multiple steps.
- Procurement process – During the process to renew the initial service contract with Real Time Transportation, Inc., it was determined that there may have been issues with the initial procurement process.

Client Assessment

Through this process, staff also completed a client assessment, by contacting or attempting to contact each of the more than 2,000 individuals listed on the program roster. Through this process, it was determined that a large number of the clients listed were not active participants of the program. More than 1,500 of these clients had not used the service in 6 months or more and did not indicate a need for the service when contacted and about 250 clients contact were already eligible for another service, such as DART Paratransit. Only 60 were unable to be reached.

Program Improvements

Through the program operations review and client assessment, staff learned a number of important lessons that were used to implement program improvements. From conversations with clients, staff recognized that cost is a significant barrier to service for program clients, which is likely why some clients opt to forgo other services that may have a cost, and that “self-certification” is not a reliable method for eligibility screening. Additionally, many clients required significant support in navigating DART Paratransit and other program applications and that there is a lack of clarity on the various services available and their various eligibility requirements.

Staff committed to implementing the following program improvements:

- Support existing clients to apply for DART paratransit eligibility
- Screen new SMTP applications to determine paratransit eligibility prior to SMTP approval
- Cross-reference existing client list to prevent duplication
- Casework with seniors to navigate DART paratransit certification process
- Partner with DART, City of Dallas (CoD) Transportation Department to develop a mobility management strategy
- Enhance “on demand” transportation services
- Support rider fare through coupons and other subsidies
- Conduct annual client assessments and review of program operations

DART Rides Program

The DART Rides program is a subsidized fare program that serves residents of qualified cities and zip codes who are ages 65+ and/or persons with disabilities. The program provides “on demand” transportation, which can be scheduled up to one hour in advance via a phone reservation line. Clients receive a reloadable debit card which they can use to purchase transportation through the program. The rider is responsible for funding 25% of the card balance, which is then matched 75% by the program. Any fund balance remaining at the end of the month will roll over to the following month.

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Execution of the interlocal agreement will expand this service across the City of Dallas through April 2022. The program has been piloted in 2 zip codes in Dallas, with advocacy from the Senior Affairs Commission in 2017, and has received positive feedback from participants. The proposed agreement between DART and City of Dallas includes client transition funds to support transition to the subsidy-based program. Additionally, DART will manage scheduling and client enrollment, and will ensure that only clients who are not eligible for the DART Paratransit program will enroll. Together, the DART Rides Program and Paratransit program will provide affordable and reliable transportation for older adults and individuals with disabilities with varying levels of need.

	Program Through March 2020	Proposed Pilot
Provider(s)	Contract with transportation providers (Real Time Transportation, Inc., Southern Link, Medixcar)	DART
Service Delivery Model	Scheduled transportation, requires 2 days advanced noticed	On demand transportation, up
Scheduling	CoD staff manage scheduling and submit daily	Managed by DART
Hours	Monday – Friday; 8am – 5pm	7 days per week; 5am – 11pm
Funding	City of Dallas General Fund	Subsidized model – client contributes 25% of total account balance City of Dallas general fund matched with NCTCOG grant funding
Contract Timeframe	Through March 31, 2020	Through April 2022, pending execution of Interlocal Agreement between CoD and DART
Cost per Trip (to program)	Currently \$25/trip non-ambulatory; \$40/trip ambulatory	Approximately \$22/trip (factoring in subsidies and DART program management costs)

Benefits of the Pilot Program

The proposed pilot program leverages general fund investment through a match from the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) to make a critical service available to all eligible residents in Dallas. The DART Rides program will provide a level of flexibility using an “on demand” program model and enables the clients to manage their own transportation needs, whereas the current program requires advanced scheduling. This will also reduce demands on City staff for scheduling. Importantly, the program is in alignment with the City’s Department of Transportation key priorities covering equity and multimodal mobility.

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	Projected Cost	CoD Share	NCTCOG Match	Projected Trips/ Year	Average Cost/Trip
FY 2020	\$240,624.86	\$120,312.43	\$120,312.43	11,294	\$21.37*
FY 2021	\$241,931.90	\$120,965.95	\$120,965.95	14,342	\$16.87
FY 2022	\$191,901.42	\$95,950.71	\$95,950.71	9,706	\$19.77

* Includes cost of client transition support

Background

On September 21, 2016, City Council authorized funds for the SMTP by Resolution No. 16-1526; and, on November 24, 2016, a Request for Competitive Sealed Proposal (RFCSP) was issued to solicit proposals for the SMTP.

On December 29, 2016, two proposals to implement the SMTP were received and, on January 11, 2017, Real Time Transportation Corporation was selected as the successful proposer by the Senior Medical Transportation Program Selection Committee.

On February 8, 2017, City Council Authorized a one-year service contract, with two (2) one-year renewal options, with Real Time Transportation Corporation to provide transport services to medical appointments within the City of Dallas for low-to-moderate income seniors by Resolution No. 17-0298.

On March 6, 2017 a service agreement was executed with Real Time Transportation Corporation, and the contract began on March 7, 2017.

On October 12, 2017, the Regional Transportation Council (RTC) approved projects for the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program in the City of Dallas and on October 26, 2017, the NCTCOG Executive Board authorized NCTCOG to enter into an agreement with the City of Dallas.

In FY2018, the City was awarded a North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) grant award: The Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program to enable the expansion of the SMTP to serve more clients and include wellness visits and appointments throughout Dallas County, based on the program’s structure at the time. Federal Transit Administration Section 49 U.S.C 5310 authorizes and sets forth the provisions for the Program, which is intended to enhance mobility for seniors and persons with disabilities by providing funds for programs to serve the special needs of transit-dependent populations beyond traditional public transportation services and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary services.

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On February 28, 2018, a contract extension for seven months and increase in funding by \$242,592.00 with Real Time Transportation was brought before City Council. City Council expressed concerns about overall program operations. City Council postponed and deferred discussion of contract extension to March 28, 2018; and, on April 11, 2018, City Council authorized Supplemental Agreement No. 1 to the service contract with Real Time Transportation Corporation to continue to provide transportation services to medical appointments within the City of Dallas for low-to-moderate income seniors for the period March 1, 2018 through September 30, 2018, in an amount not to exceed \$90,000.00, from \$190,000.00 to \$280,000.00, as amended by Council Resolution No. 18-0559. The vendor opted not to execute the renewed contract, thus requiring the identification of another provider to prevent interruption of services. Staff completed a bid process to identify providers of transportation services and wheelchair-accessible transportation services and identified Southern Link Dallas Inc. and Medixcar, with whom contracts were executed via Administrative Action. Southern Link Dallas, Inc. was contracted to provide transportation services and Medixcar was contracted to provide wheelchair-accessible transportation.

On March 18, 2019, Council approved the authorization of the NCTCOG contract, which provides one-to-one match for senior medical and wellness transportation services. In FY 2018-19, negotiations began between Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), The City of Dallas Senior Medical Transportation Program (SMTP) and North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG). Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) provides a Transportation Assistance Program in selected areas within the DART service area which allows eligible seniors to schedule and pay for transportation services from the user’s transportation subsidy account, as well as providing on-demand service. The City of Dallas has determined that it may be beneficial to contract with DART to provide Senior Medical Transportation using the DART Rides Program service. Chapter 791 of the Texas Government Code and Texas Transportation Code Article 251 provide authorization for local governments to contract with each other for the performance of governmental functions and services. The City shall provide the funding to support the service as operated by DART.

On June 25, 2020, staff presented an update on the proposed plan to move forward in partnership with DART for the implementation of the Senior Medical Transportation Program to the Senior Affairs Commission (SAC) Transportation Committee. On January 13, 2020, City staff again briefed the SAC committee, since renamed the Transportation and Outdoor Spaces Committee and under leadership of a new SAC chair and new committee chair.

On January 21, 2020, staff briefed the Quality of Life committee on the project. The briefing included an overview of the program history, lessons learned and proposed plan to contract with DART as the service provider for the program.

On January 27, 2020, staff briefed the full Senior Affairs Commission on the project. During the meeting, the commission voted in support of the proposed pilot with DART

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