

INTER OFFICE MEMO

To: Board of Directors

Date: June 10, 2021

From: Rashida Kamara, Director of ADA and Special Services

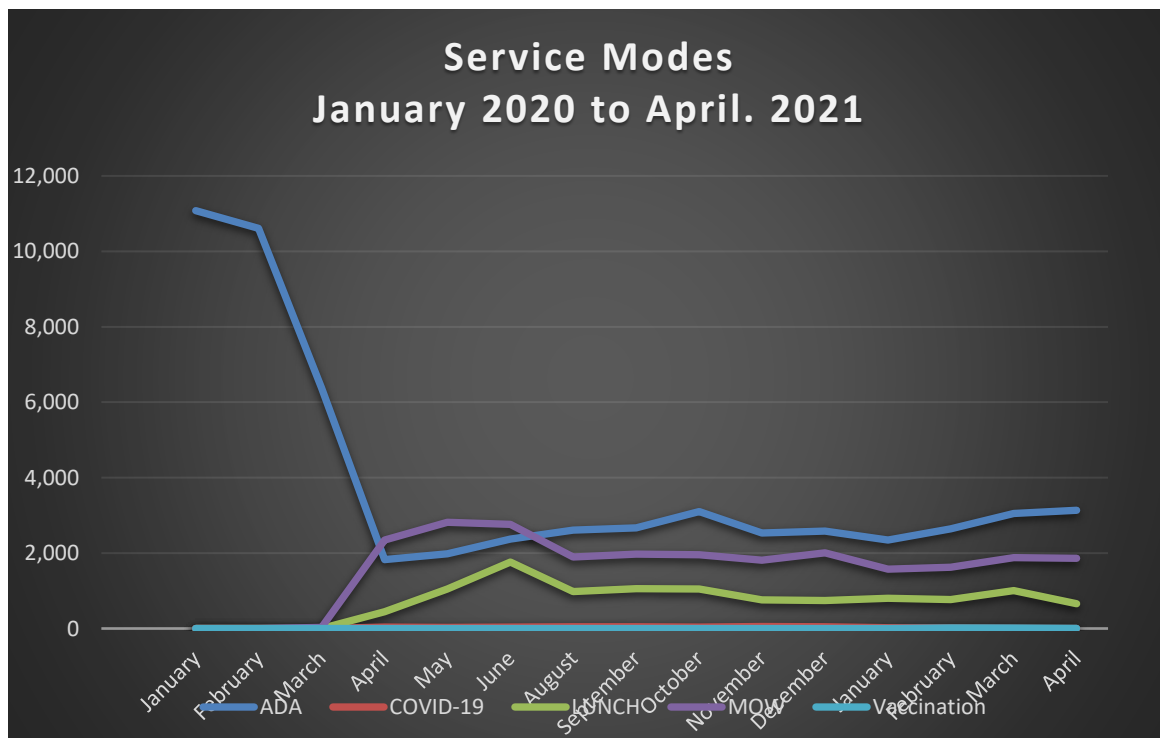
Reviewed by: *WC.*

SUBJECT: Paratransit Update: Ridership Demand and Reopening

Background:

In March of 2020, the Governor of California issued a shelter in place order due to the rapidly spreading COVID-19 virus. Paratransit service was dramatically reduced as a result of that order. LINK service, along with their contractor Transdev, collaborated with county and city programs to provide essential services to the community. Such services included Meals on Wheels, school lunches, grocery deliveries and the transporting of COVID-19 positive passengers for the County Health department. The chart below shows the different service modes and the volume of service provided to the community.

In February 2021, vaccines were made widely available to persons over the age of 65, health and emergency workers, which included transit drivers and staff. County Connection continued its effort with the County Health department by providing transportation services for vulnerable persons to vaccine sites. County Connection staff continues to work with Contra Costa Health Services (CCHS) to ensure our healthy transit plan is relevant and up to date enabling the Authority to provide safe transit options for riders.



	ADA	COVID-19	LUNCH	MOW	Vaccination
January	11,079	0	0	0	0
February	10,606	0	0	0	0
March	6,374	0	0	28	0
April	1,827	40	446	2,346	0
May	1,984	26	1,045	2,817	0
June	2,373	38	1,762	2,759	0
August	2,613	48	983	1,894	0
September	2,667	44	1,057	1,977	0
October	3,105	42	1,046	1,960	0
November	2,535	54	756	1,814	0
December	2,582	47	741	2,009	0
January	2,345	19	803	1,572	0
February	2,640	9	766	1,624	16
March	3,054	4	1006	1,883	12
April	3,136	0	658	1,863	2

Service Trends:

As of February 2021, we continue to see an uptick in paratransit riders. We believe that access to vaccines has played a role in this increase since according to Contra Costa Health Services (CCHS) individuals over the age of 65 have reached a 92% vaccination rate in the county. Meals on Wheels trips have gone down significantly since our June 2020 peak, but we continue to provide essential deliveries for them. As paratransit rides continue to go up, we will see Meal deliveries go down. In April we discontinued COVID positive transports for the county, but we have used some of the resources to provide trips for individuals to obtain vaccines.

In addition to a steady increase in LINK passengers, there has been a notable increase in LAVTA’s paratransit passengers. At the start of the pilot, peak ridership was 56 passengers a day, recently they experienced a 25% jump in ridership. The additional ridership represented a handful of social service centers and a good number of shopping centers and grocery stores. Staff anticipates LINK may experience a similar jump in ridership as the state gears up to a June 15th reopening.

Re-Opening Efforts:

For the past 3 months staff has engaged in dialogue with social service groups regarding their re-opening efforts. This includes getting a clear understanding of the State and local mask and social distancing mandates, exemptions to the mask mandates for certain users due to medical needs, clarifying the need for temperature checks for passengers and updating expired ADA eligibility statuses and shared ride services.

As of May 24, 2021, we received 4 requests by social service entities to provide transportation services to their recently opened facilities. One thing all the centers have in common is the reopening process in being conducted in a phased approach. Some are allowing anywhere from 2 to 5 participants at a time per day. Most centers are having two shifts a day to accommodate their participants while maintaining social distancing (9-1130a and 1230pm-330pm). Staff has heard from some centers that getting enough staff for what seems like more one-on-one care is a concern and will drive how many participants arrive at the centers at any given time. Since the onset of the pandemic and in an effort to limit the spread of the virus, paratransit has been a non-shared ride service. This was instrumental in contact tracing efforts. As ridership increases, we have started allowing up to 3 passengers at a time. This capacity increase still accounts for 6ft social distancing but gives us the ability to transport more riders safely. Additionally, looking forward to the California State re-opening "Beyond the Blueprint" on June 15th, there is an anticipation that this may create even more demand for paratransit services. As staff monitors demand growth it will become imperative to increase capacity on paratransit vehicles in order to meet the needs of our customers.

Recommendation:

None for Information only