

To: Operations and Scheduling Committee

Date: 11/25/2022

From: Rashida Kamara Director of ADA and Specialized Services

Reviewed by: WC.

SUBJECT: County Connection Contract With Choice in Aging

Background:

Choice in Aging (CIA) an adult social service agency represents about 20% of our daily paratransit trip volume, pre-COVID. In the summer of 2017, when First Transit was our contractor, CIA experienced a number of service issues related to the County Connection LINK service. In response to the growing number of complaints, County Connection retained the consulting services of an ADA Paratransit expert to investigate, summarize and recommend best practices to improve the service. County Connection's General Manager and CIA President and CEO, Debbie Toth, agreed that insight from a neutral third party would be mutually beneficial in assessing the issues and making a recommendation to improve the paratransit experience.

A small subset of passengers to CIA were identified as having challenges using the County Connection LINK service. This subset of passengers due to their unique conditions struggle to effectively use paratransit services. Upon the recommendation of the consultant, one of the proposed solutions was to provide a more tailored service to the small subset of individuals that found the existing paratransit program challenging to use. Staff proposed using a specialized ADA Transportation Network Company (TNC) to solve this issue. As a result, in March 2019, the Board approved a six-month pilot project, in which Choice in Aging would retain the services of SilverRide. Following the six-month pilot, staff intended to recommend the continued participation in the program with Choice in Aging with the option for same day booking. Unfortunately, effective March 16th, 2020, there was a Statewide shelter in place order issued by the Governor of California, due to the widespread number of COVID-19 cases. Social services like Choice in Aging were forced to close their doors and the program was suspended.

In January 2022, the board approved a new and improved demonstration project as County Connection worked with Choice in Aging staff to reopen and identify new passengers and provide a same-day option to book trips using SilverRide. This same-day option eliminated unforeseen no-shows and gave other passengers the opportunity to book rides and benefit from the program if they so desired on the same day.

Project Update:

Staff continues to review the success of the project. On time performance has been sustained at 92% and above; no shows due to late rides have significantly decreased. When the new project started in

January, only one vehicle was in use. Service reopening has now necessitated 3 vehicles. As a result, the growth and the success of the project has called for continued support from County Connection. With labor issues facing traditional paratransit services, having a partnership with Choice in Aging and a TNC service like SilverRide has been beneficial for all.

Financial Implications:

County Connection budgeted \$300,000 for FY 23, anticipating the program would ramp up this summer and operate for a full year. The subset of passengers using the SilverRide service has been slower to return than other paratransit passengers resulting in a significant drop in expected expenses. Staff projects the program expense at \$150,000 through June 2023 with an average trip cost of \$37.50.

Recommendation:

Due to the success of the demonstration project both from a customer service standpoint and a financial perspective, staff recommends entering into a multi-year contract with Choice in Aging, providing them the ability to extend their contract with SilverRide. This will provide a permanent alternative transportation service, offered by County Connection through CIA which is safe reliable and cost effective for a vulnerable population in our service area.

Action Requested:

Staff respectfully requests the Operations & Scheduling Committee forward to the Board of Directors permission for the General Manager to enter a multi-year contract with CIA enabling them to extend their contract with SilverRide.

Attachments:

None