

To: Operations and Scheduling Committee

Date: 11/27/2023

From: John Sanderson Director of ADA and Specialized Services

Reviewed by: *Ref*

SUBJECT: County Connection MOU With Choice in Aging

Background:

Choice in Aging (CiA), an adult social service agency accounted for about 20% of County Connection's daily paratransit trip volume, before the COVID-19 pandemic. In the summer of 2017, under the prior paratransit service contractor, CiA and its clients experienced a number of challenges related to County Connection LINK paratransit service. To address these issues, County Connection retained a consultant to make recommendations to improve communication between County Connection and CiA, and to improve service outcomes for CiA's most vulnerable clients.

One of the solutions proposed by the consultant was that County Connection and CiA work together to provide a more tailored service using an accessible Transportation Network Company (TNC) partner for the small number of CiA clients that were unable to use LINK paratransit to access the CiA program. As a result, in March 2019, the Board approved a six-month pilot project, in which CiA would retain the services of SilverRide.

In January 2022, following a nearly two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, the Board again approved a demonstration pilot project as County Connection staff worked with CiA staff to reopen and identify new passengers. The new pilot also included a same-day booking option for the first time, enabling qualified program participants to book same-day trips to CiA using SilverRide. This same-day option was intended to eliminate unforeseen no-shows to the CiA day program and gave other clients the opportunity to benefit from the program by reducing or eliminating unused program placements.

Project Update:

Staff continues to review the progress of the project. On-time performance has been sustained above 90%, while no-shows due to late rides have significantly decreased. As a result, the growth and the success of the pilot project calls for continued support from County Connection. With the nationwide labor shortage of commercial drivers facing traditional paratransit services, the partnership with CiA and 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 now projects the program expense at not-to-exceed \$250,000 through September 2024 with an average trip cost of \$36.95, per CiA's agreement with SilverRide.

Recommendation:

Due to the success encountered in previous phases of the demonstration project both from a customer service standpoint and a financial perspective, staff recommends extending the MOU with CiA, providing them the ability to extend their contract with SilverRide. This will continue to provide an 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 new one-year MOU with CiA enabling them to extend their contract with SilverRide.

Attachments:

None