

To: Operations and Scheduling Committee

Date: 8/31/2018

From: Rashida Kamara Manager of Accessible Services **Reviewed by:**

SUBJECT: Paratransit Consultant Update

Background:

In response to a growing number of complaints from Mount Diablo Rehab regarding service failures, County Connection retained the Consulting Services of an ADA Paratransit expert to investigate, summarize and recommend best practices to improve service. Both County Connection's General Manager and Mount Diablo's President & CEO, Debbie Toth agreed that insight from a neutral third party would be mutually beneficial in assessing the issues and making recommendation to improve the paratransit experience.

The consultant chosen was Douglas Cross of Douglas Cross Transportation Consulting. As part of his investigation, he met with First Transit staff to observe LINK's day-to-day operation. He also spoke with several Mount Diablo staff to ascertain service issues from their perspective, reviewed County Connections contract with First Transit and the execution of their contract. All of this predated the hiring of an Accessible Services Manager, a role that was recently filled.

As part of the summary or objective, staff wanted to know what the issues were, what steps have been taken so far to resolve them, and finally recommendations of what can be done to improve the service.

Consultant's Investigation Update:

The issues discovered included late rides, for example, arriving to the rehab after their scheduled appointment time, excessively long trips, lack of a comprehensive complaint process, not understanding the 30-minute window and an overall poor response to issues by LINK staff.

His investigation revealed, the following:

- First Transit was short staffed most of the time
- Constant shortage of drivers
- Lack of a comprehensive complaint and response mechanism in place to respond to issues in a timely manner.
- Lack of on-going training on dispatching protocols.

- Lack of basic transportation scheduling technology like, tablets and dispatching interfacing tools, resulting in First Transit's inability to manage their day-to-day operations
- Mount Diablo lack of comprehension of ADA paratransit service in general; causing them to have an expectation of service outside of the ADA requirements
- Mt Diablo frequent request for Same-day service
- County Connections limited oversight of the contractor

Consultants Recommendations:

- Increase Contractor oversight
- Outline contractor expectations, by addressing these in the next RFP
- Educate Mt Diablo on ADA paratransit service
- Engage Mt Diablo and other LINK users service expectations
- Increase staffing levels to meet demand
- Develop a comprehensive complaint response system
- Update educational materials, like Riders Guide to clearly outline Service expectations

Progress to Date:

Since the onset of this investigation, First Transit and County Connection have worked together with Mount Diablo to systematically analyze the different issues and develop immediate and on-going action items to improve service.

- County Connection hired an Accessible Services manager, who immediately started creating and implementing Outreach and Education for Mount Diablo and Paratransit users in general.
- First Transit has hired two more dispatchers to assist with day-to-day operations.
- Schedulers are now assigned to review routes the night before to catch potential issues.
- First Transit brought in a Trapeze expert to review system settings and progress is being made in adjusting setting to better manage trips
- Trapeze has conducted refresher training for First Transit dispatchers and schedulers to help them dispatch in the moment. Trapeze will be conducting on-going training in the near future.
- First Transit is also conducting on-going driver training programs each month to boost their driver count.
- County Connection is in the process of developing and implementing a comprehensive Complaint and Response procedure,
- County Connection is conducting education and outreach with Mount Diablo and other agencies. The education includes working with Mount Diablo to determine appropriate appointment times and ensuring they understand the Riders Guide and working within its parameters. We are also reviewing our outreach materials for any necessary updates.

- County Connection is addressing Rider education during the eligibility process, helping the rider to understand paratransit expectations from the onset.
- County Connection is also reviewing current policies and procedures to see if they can be revised to ensure compliance with FTA regulations and are in line with best practices in the industry.
- County Connection has issued First Transit a formal Performance review letter to escalate resolutions and outline expectations moving forward.

Financial Implications:

None

Recommendation:

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