

**To:** Operations and Scheduling Committee

**Date:** 09/25/2024

**From:** John Sanderson, Director of ADA and Specialized Services

**Reviewed by:** *Ref*

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**SUBJECT: Bay Area Regional Transit Transformation Action Plan – Accessibility Initiatives Update**

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### Background:

Following an exhaustive process during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Blue-Ribbon Transit Recovery Taskforce, convened by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) issued its final report in July 2021, recommending 27 specific actions to re-shape the region's transit system into a more connected, more efficient, and more user-focused mobility network across the entire Bay Area. This set of actions forms the cornerstone of a formal Bay Area Transit Transformation Action Plan (TTAP), which was adopted by the MTC in fall 2021. Each of the 27 actions falls into one of five broad categories: Fares and Fare Payment, Customer Information, the Bay Area's Transit Network, Accessibility, and Funding. Actions 21 through 25 were specifically focused on the transportation needs of people with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes. These five actions include:

- Action 21: Designate a Mobility Manager to coordinate rides and function as a liaison between transit agencies and other services in each county,
- Action 22: Fund additional subregional one-seat paratransit ride pilots and develop cost-sharing and transfer policies for cross jurisdictional paratransit trips,
- Action 23: Integrate Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit services on the next generations of the Clipper program (Clipper 2.0),
- Action 24: Identify key paratransit challenges and recommend changes, and
- Action 25: Adopt standardized eligibility practices for programs that benefit people with disabilities – ADA paratransit and the Regional Transit Connection (RTC) program.

Work on the Accessibility Initiatives, as with all 27 recommended action items, is co-led by Staff from MTC's Regional Network Management (RNM) Section, and designated staff representatives from the transit operators. In March 2024, County Connection's Director of ADA and Specialized Services was selected to serve as co-lead for the five regional Accessibility initiatives.

### Project Update:

Much has been accomplished since the TTAP was released, including important progress toward Actions 22, 23, and 25, thanks in large part to coordination between MTC RNM and Clipper program staff, and

the Bay Area Partnership Accessibility Committee (BAPAC) in which County Connection staff have played an important role. Work on Actions 21 and 24 is anticipated to extend at least as far as FY 2026 and possibly well into FY 2027.

Approximately \$1 million in grant funding has been identified to support three new one-seat ride pilot projects (in addition to County Connection's current one-seat program) under Action 22. Work is under way to identify current demand for inter-agency transfer trips, develop parameters for testing through the multi-pilot program, and recruit agency partners to run the pilots. Pilot operations are anticipated to begin in the Spring of 2025.

Under Action 23, the Clipper 2.0 scope of work has successfully been revised to include the full implementation of next-generation Clipper fare payments on ADA paratransit services throughout the Bay Area.

Under Action 25, the Bay Area's paratransit leaders, working through the BAPAC, were able to negotiate a common set of practices for ADA paratransit eligibility assessments for the first time in over 20 years. The final report detailing the results of Action 25 was endorsed by the RNM Council in September and will be presented to the RNM Committee and the full MTC Commission for adoption later in the Fall.

Work is just beginning on a program to implement Action 21. Conditions vary significantly between the nine Bay Area counties, so it is understood that a one-size-fits-all approach to designating a "Mobility Manager" for each county would likely be both ineffective and disruptive. Instead, a more nuanced approach is being developed to ensure that all stakeholders' positions can be understood and incorporated into the process, and MTC staff have committed to not endorse a solution for any county that leads to an inequitable outcome.

Preliminary discussions have also begun regarding potential updates to the TTAP recommendations, including the remaining Accessibility items, in light of developments affecting the Bay Area's transit outlook since the plan was initially released in 2021.

**Financial Implications:**

None

**Recommendation:**

None. Information Only.

**Action Requested:**

None. Information Only.

**Attachments:**

None