

May 22, 2023

Stakeholder Committee Kickoff Meeting

NFTA-Metro Paratransit Study

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Today's Presentation

- 1 Study overview
- 2 Engagement planning
- 3 Discussion





Study Overview

Study Goals

The NFTA-Metro Paratransit Study has the following goals:

- Improve efficiency and effectiveness
- Enhance the overall customer experience
- Identify new and improved service delivery opportunities
- Evaluate service area expansion
- Ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)



ADA Requirements

- Complementary paratransit is:
 - A “safety net” service for those whose disability prevents them from riding fixed-route service or traveling to/from bus stops or train stations
 - Offered to eligible individuals for travel within 3/4 mile of non-commuter bus routes or rail stations during the same times that fixed-route service operates
 - Governed by U.S. Department of Transportation Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations

Selected DOT ADA Regulatory Topics

- Trip reservations and telephone hold times
- Timeliness of pickups and drop-offs (for trips with appointments)
- Trip lengths (when compared with fixed route)
- Training of personnel
- Complaint process
- Rider policies (late cancellations, no-shows, and appeals)

Study Objectives

- Ensure that NFTA's complementary paratransit service (PAL):
 - Meets the DOT ADA requirements
 - Is efficient, making the best use of public funds
 - Can meet customer needs today and in the future
 - Can offer innovative services
 - Is equitable
 - Delivers excellent customer service



Consultant Team

- Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates, Inc. (Boston, MA) – Project Lead
- Highland Planning (Rochester, NY) – Engagement
- Marine Tiger Technologies (Teaneck, NJ) – Technology
- Thatcher Consulting (Topsfield, MA) – ADA Paratransit
- Thomas Procopio (Reading, MA) – Scheduling Software
- Setroc Group (New Brunswick, NJ) – Website and Communications

Study Phases

- Phase 1 – Evaluation, research, and engagement to recommend improvements
- Phase 2 – Estimation of future demand, costs, and options for delivering paratransit, including expanded service area
- Phase 3 – Implementation plan design

- **Engage with Stakeholder Committee and others throughout the study**

Phase 1 Overview

- Conduct a PAL service evaluation (next slide)
- Conduct research into how other transit agencies deliver complementary paratransit and suggest ideas that NFTA can implement
- Identify and recommend opportunities for improvement
- Develop and implement a stakeholder engagement plan



Phase 1 Service Evaluation

- Compile data, conduct interviews (riders, drivers, other staff), and directly observe PAL service
- Typical focus areas for improvements include:
 - Customer experience
 - Organization and administration
 - Policies, procedures, rider guides, etc.
 - Training, hiring, and retention of staff
 - Use of technology
 - Overall service delivery

Phase 2 Overview

- Estimate future demand for current PAL service area
- Estimate demand for expanded service area
- Estimate future costs and suggest service delivery options

Phase 3 Overview

- Design an implementation strategy for different timelines
 - Short-term strategies that can be implemented quickly
 - Medium-term feasible strategies that take more time
 - Longer-term strategies that require more study and potentially more funding



Stakeholder Engagement

Engagement Goals

- Learn from representative riders and others about PAL (applying for eligibility, requesting trips, riding, etc.)
- Seek input on ideas for improvement
- Seek input on potential service expansion
- Obtain feedback at key milestones

Stakeholder Committee Role

- Advise on issues and opportunities
- Provide input and review key findings
- Help spread the word and encourage others to participate

Engagement Planning Activities

- Pre-engagement interviews
 - 20-minute phone conversations to help with design
- Stakeholder Engagement Plan (in development)
 - Spells out goals, outreach strategies, activities, events, etc.
- Rider outreach
 - What is the best way to reach riders?
 - Virtual meetings?
 - Small groups?



Discussion

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Additional Discussion Questions

- What should the team focus on as it evaluates the PAL service?
- What does NFTA's PAL team do well?
- What would you like to see changed in the future?

Thank you!



Bill Schwartz, AICP

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