



Item #11

DATE: April 7, 2021

TO: GCTD Board of Directors

FROM: Marlena Kohler, Purchasing Manager
Margaret Heath-Schoep, Paratransit & Special Projects Manager *M. Schoep*

SUBJECT: Consider Authorizing Award of a Contract to MV Transportation for Late Night Safe Rides

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak GCTD reduced fixed route transit service across many routes leaving many late-night essential employees without a reliable travel option to return home from work. This Late-Night Rides Demonstration Project would help fund general public demand responsive service for transit riders, including low-income and essential workers to fill the current transit service gap for travel in the late evening hours between 8:00 PM and 11:00 PM.

This demonstration project is part of GCTD's building back transit ridership efforts. These efforts are aimed at the evolving work force to specifically identify travel patterns that may be different now as the community continues to adapt to the new normal unfolding as COVID related travel and gathering restrictions are eased.

The purpose of the demonstration pilot is to provide essential workers with reliable public transit options throughout the GCTD service area. Data from this project may assist our Planning Department's on-going service design work. Provision of a public transit option is important to social equity by increasing mobility for those who may have been adversely impacted by the economic impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic. Funding for this project is provided through a JARC CARES grant awarded in December 2020.

It is recommended the Board of Directors approve authorize the General Manager to execute a contract for the Operation of the Late-Night Safe Rides demonstration project in the amount (not to exceed) \$301,700 for a period not to exceed 18 months.

GOLD COAST TRANSIT DISTRICT

II. BACKGROUND

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak GCTD reduced fixed route transit service across many routes leaving many late-night essential employees without a reliable travel option to return home from work. This Late-Night Rides Demonstration Project would help fund general public demand responsive service for transit riders, including low-income and essential workers to fill the current transit service gap for travel in the late evening hours between 8:00 PM and 11:00 PM. A one-hour minimum advanced reservation will permit adherence to the social distancing requirements currently in place as a preventative measure to combat the spread of COVID-19. The Late-Night Rides Demonstration project would enable employees who choose public transit as a means of transportation to work, to also be assured of a safe and affordable ride home from work.

In June 2020, GCTD initiated and completed an online passenger survey as part of our planning efforts to respond to COVID-19. The objective was to better understand passenger concerns as many passengers began to resume their riding activities during a public health crisis (COVID-19). In this passenger survey, 35% of respondents listed late night service as a top requested service to be restored. However due to funding limitations and in order to ensure social distancing, priority was given to restoring frequency on mid-day service first.

In order to maintain social distancing as recommended by public health officials, GCTD prioritized the preservation of baseline frequency on core routes. Funding constraints eliminated a number of late-night trips (when moving to a weekend schedule). As GCTD looks forward to recovery, a solution to fill the gap in late night service for passengers who work in essential jobs has been identified.

Staff applied for and was awarded JARC CARES funding to support a Late-Night Safe Rides project. JARC is Jobs Access Reverse Commute – for projects that assist individuals gain access to employment opportunities these individuals would otherwise not have. The CARES component is for projects that specifically address COVID related issues that developed since the start of the pandemic in March 2020.

The *Late-Night Safe Rides* demonstration project will provide late night curb to curb service to employees/essential workers who currently have little to no public transit options to commute from work after 8PM—11PM. GCTD provides service on 16 fixed routes. All but two routes are out of service by 9PM, providing very light coverage for late night service. This project expands the availability of public transit to late shift essential workers. VCTC noted in its FY19-20 Unmet Transit Needs Assessment (which received over 200 public

comments) that “later service” was noted as being among the most frequently asked for transit improvement; this demonstration project will begin to address this issue. Currently there is little to no public transit service options available for employees/essential workers to use after 8PM. This project will provide access to reverse commute for those individuals who have no other options.

This project could be quickly implemented by simply opening GCTD’s existing paratransit services and reservations processes to employees/essential workers, needing to commute late at night. All key components, personnel that would staff this project as well as software and vehicles, are currently in place. Pre-pandemic, demand for GO ACCESS service after 7 PM was minimal, and that trend continues today. The introduction of this late at night demonstration service is not anticipated to impact delivery of ADA or senior paratransit services.

MV was asked to provide pricing on this demonstration service. The cost of adding this service to the existing demand response services operated under contract by MV is incremental; these savings are being passed onto GCTD.

This JARC CARES grant funded demonstration project addresses unique COVID related transportation issues that have arisen out of the pandemic that may or may not exist after COVID related hospitalizations decrease, vaccinations increase, pandemic related social distancing and other efforts cease to be of necessity. This demonstration project may provide valuable planning data for the Planning Department to develop post COVID services. The impact to the paratransit operating budget is minimal.

III. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION ACTION

It is recommended the Board of Directors approve authorize the General Manager to execute a contract for the Operation of the Late-Night Safe Rides demonstration project in the amount (not to exceed) \$301,700 for a period not to exceed 18 months.

GENERAL MANAGER’S CONCURRENCE


