

STAFF REPORT



MEETING DATE:	December 15, 2020
SUBJECT:	Receive Update on ShastaConnect Transit Services
AGENDA ITEM:	9
STAFF CONTACT:	Sean Tiedgen, AICP, Senior Transportation Planner

SUMMARY:

SRTA contracts with Dignity Health Connected Living (DHCL) to provide ShastaConnect transit services, including Monday–Friday rural public transit and Sunday On-Demand Transit. The recently acquired Via on-demand software package is being used on both ShastaConnect services and has greatly improved system operations and performance tracking. The Sunday On-Demand Transit service was suspended for seven months, but restarted on November 1, 2020, with an expanded service area that includes the cities of Anderson, Redding, and Shasta Lake. Rural public transit service ridership has been impacted significantly since April 2020 due to COVID-19; however, reverse transit trips (i.e., delivery of essential goods to at-risk riders) have helped address the community’s need.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the board of directors receive an update on ShastaConnect transit services.

DISCUSSION:

Software Transition Update – The Via software is integral to the operation, management, customer service, and performance of the ShastaConnect services, including making on-demand routing and ride-sharing possible. Since relaunching ShastaConnect with Via’s software, the service experience has greatly improved, including:

- Dispatchers can manage operations, driver shifts, and bookings more reliably;
- Drivers are being routed more efficiently;
- Riders can more accurately tell us where their trip pick-up/drop-off locations are; and
- Riders receive more detailed and frequently updated ride information.

The Via software has been in use for both Sunday On-Demand Transit and Monday–Friday rural public transit ShastaConnect services since November 1, 2020. Via is meeting both services’ needs, including: showing service area boundaries for each service; restricting weekday trip requests in the RABA service area; and providing easy-to-use performance reporting tools. While adjusting to the new software, overall responses from drivers, administrators, and riders have been positive and confidence is high that ridership will increase over time.

Sunday On-Demand Transit Service Update – The ShastaConnect Sunday On-Demand Transit Service initially launched and operated for five months from October 13, 2019, through March 30, 2020, before being suspended due to COVID-19. On November 1, 2020, the service relaunched with an expanded service area that covers the cities of Anderson, Redding, and Shasta Lake. As of December 2, 2020, there are 176 registered riders. Key service performance metrics for November 2020 are summarized in the following table.

Month	Total Passenger Trips	Avg. Daily Passenger Trips	% of Trips with Ridesharing	Avg. Trip Length	Avg. Ride Time
November	146	29	13%	4.9 miles	12.4 min

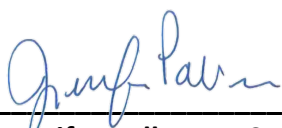
Initial relaunch ridership is low (about 50 percent of ridership before the pandemic) because of two factors: 1) the service restarted with a soft launch, and 2) COVID-19 has impacted vehicle capacity limits and requires social distancing of riders and drivers. At service relaunch, outreach was focused on previously registered ShastaConnect riders and existing RABA and DHCL transit riders. Social media and email blasts were also distributed. Informational postcards will be distributed to businesses, service centers, and regional partners in December to increase awareness about the service and ridership. While the service is still a pilot service for evaluation purposes, it has partially become a lifeline service due to the pandemic, because riders need access to essential services and jobs on Sundays. Currently, the service is less focused on getting many shared rides (e.g., 4–6 riders on a vehicle at a time). As state guidelines allow, the focus will return to encouraging more shared rides, supported by broad print and electronic outreach (e.g., tv, radio, or social media) about the service.

Monday–Friday Service Update – In addition to the Sunday service, SRTA contracts with DHCL to provide rural public transit services outside of the RABA service area under the ShastaConnect brand. Due to COVID-19, Monday–Friday ridership is down approximately 52 percent. However, one innovative idea by SRTA and DHCL staff to respond to rider needs was to provide a “reverse transit” service. Reverse transit trips allow individuals – who normally ride – to instead order essential items (e.g., groceries and medicine), notify DHCL that an order has been made, and then DHCL picks up and delivers their pre-paid order. This service allows at-risk riders to receive their essential items, while limiting their travel exposure.

For many years, the Monday–Friday rural public transit service was limited to seniors and individuals with limited mobility. However, social media comments and Unmet Transit Needs show a growing need for periodic on-demand public transit for all individuals living outside the RABA service area. Recently, SRTA received grant funding to expand the rural public transit service to allow anyone 18 years of age or older to ride. [See April 2020 staff report on SRTA website.](#) Software technology to make this possible has been completed, as discussed above. SRTA is working with DHCL to finalize outreach activities to potential riders and regional partners. Full implementation of this effort will happen by the end of this year and an update will be provided at the February meeting.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

SRTA contracts with DHCL to operate the ShastaConnect Sunday On-Demand Transit and Monday–Friday rural public transit services.



Jennifer Pollom, AICP, Senior Transportation Planner