

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. 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. The Sunday On-Demand Transit service was suspended for seven months, but recently restarted on November 1, 2020, with an expanded service area that now includes the cities of Anderson, Redding, and Shasta Lake.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

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

DISCUSSION:

Software Transition Update – Important to the operation, management, customer service, and performance of ShastaConnect is the software, which makes on-the-fly 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.

Additionally, the Via software has been in use for both Sunday and Monday-Friday ShastaConnect services since restarting. Via is meeting SRTA and DHCL's needs for both services, including showing service area boundaries for each service; restricting weekday rider 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 has 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 November 18, 2020, there are 151 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*	81	27	18%	4 miles	11.5 min

**Note – Data for three of five Sundays in November 2020.*

Initial relaunch ridership is low because of two factors: 1) the service restarted with a “soft” launch, and 2) COVID-19 has impacted vehicle capacity limits and required 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. Distribution of an informational “ticket” to businesses, service centers, and regional partners is expected within a few weeks. While the service is still a “pilot” service for evaluation purposes, it has partially become a lifeline service due to the pandemic. Riders are needing access to essential services and jobs on Sundays. The current service is less focused on getting four to six shared rides at a time. As state guidelines allow, the focus will return to encouraging more shared rides, supported by outreach via broad print and electronic advertisement about the service.

Monday-Friday Service Update – In addition to the Sunday service, SRTA contracts with DHCL to provide Consolidated Transportation Services Agency (CTSA) and 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 order and pick up 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 CTSA/rural public transit service to allow anyone 18 years of age or older to ride. [See April 2020 staff report on SRTA website.](#) The technology piece 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 on the community response will be provided at a future meeting.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

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