



On-Demand Paratransit

National Models, Proven Results & Emerging Opportunities

Minnesota Met Council
Transit Accessibility Advisory
Committee

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What Is On-Demand Paratransit?

Same-day or near-real-time trip options layered onto traditional ADA paratransit — complementary, not a replacement.



Rider-Initiated Trips

Book a ride within minutes via app or phone — no advance scheduling required



Choose Your Service

Riders pick between traditional paratransit and on-demand based on each trip's needs



TNC & Provider Partnerships

Uber, Lyft, and specialized providers offer same-day rides alongside traditional service

Why Agencies Are Moving in This Direction

National Challenges

- Paratransit demand rising faster than budgets
- On-time performance under public scrutiny
- Call centers overwhelmed during peak hours
- Riders expect same-day options and reliability

What On-Demand Solves

- ✓ Peak-period strain on core fleets
- ✓ Cascading delays from missed pickups
- ✓ Lower costs
- ✓ Service gaps during nights, weekends, disruptions

Agencies are adding tools and flexibility. Traditional paratransit remains fully available.

How On-Demand Paratransit Works

Agencies use different models depending on their needs — all preserve ADA traditional service.

Voucher / Subsidy

Agency provides riders a subsidy (e.g. \$5 copay, up to \$30 covered). Riders book through Uber, Lyft, or other providers.

Direct Trip Dispatch (Rescue type, not rider initiated)

Agency dispatches trips to TNC/provider via API integration. Rider may not even know the trip was fulfilled by a TNC.

Multi-Provider Network

Multiple providers (taxi, TNC, fleet, etc) available. Managed under one system.

Built-In Controls & Safeguards

Agencies maintain control over costs, eligibility, and quality.



Cap Subsidies

Set maximum subsidy per trip (\$15–\$30 typical). Rider pays any overage.



Trip Limits

Monthly trip caps (e.g. 40 trips/month) control volume and cost.



Eligibility Criteria

Only eligible riders can access on-demand option.



Opt-In Design

Riders choose to participate. Traditional service always remains available.



Real-Time Data

Trip-level reporting, cost tracking, and performance monitoring built in.



Phone + App Access

Multiple booking channels maintained — no one is forced onto technology.

How Transit-TNC Partnerships Operate

Behind the scenes: the technology and processes that make it work.



API Integration

TNCs like Uber provide APIs that plug directly into existing dispatch software (Trapeze, RideCo). Dispatchers work in one system.



Eligibility & Compliance

Only pre-approved riders access on-demand. Rider opt-in forms ensure compliance. Agencies retain trip data and oversight.



Subsidy Management

Agencies set per-trip caps (\$15–\$40 typical). TNCs bill the agency for the subsidized portion. Riders pay copay or overage.



Performance Monitoring

Real-time dashboards track cost per trip, on-time rates, trip volumes. Agencies adjust parameters based on data.

On-Demand Paratransit (& Micro-Transit) Is Happening Nationwide

Major transit agencies across the country have moved from pilot to operations.

New York City

Boston

Chicago

Denver

Portland OR

Houston

San Antonio

Nashville

Las Vegas

Los Angeles

Richmond VA

Miami

Tampa/St. Pete

Harris County TX

Philadelphia

These are not pilots. These are proven, operational programs in the nation's largest transit systems.

Some of the largest U.S. cities now use on-demand transit technology for paratransit.

Boston: MBTA The RIDE Flex

Pioneering TNC partnership since 2016 — now a permanent program serving 17,000+ weekly riders.

72%

**Cost Reduction
Per Trip**

\$56.62 → \$15.92

53%

**More Trips
Taken by Riders**

Riders embraced flexibility

6%

**Net Budget
Savings**

Despite more trips taken

How It Works

Riders opt in to use Uber or Lyft for subsidized trips instead of traditional van service. Riders book through the TNC app, pay a small copay, and MBTA covers the rest up to the subsidy cap. Traditional RIDE service remains fully available for all riders who prefer it.

Boston MBTA: From Pilot to Permanent

10 years of evolution — proving the model at every stage.

2016

MBTA partners with Uber and Lyft to pilot on-demand rides for RIDE-eligible customers with disabilities

2020

TNC trips achieve 85% cost savings per trip (\$59 traditional → \$9.10 TNC). Riders take 53% more trips while total MBTA cost drops 6%

2021

Pilot made permanent as The RIDE Flex. 17,000+ weekly riders opt in. Call-in booking maintained alongside app

2026

Now a core operational program. Riders book via Uber, Lyft, or TRAC dispatch. Traditional RIDE remains fully available

Key lesson: Start with a pilot, measure results, expand when the data proves it works. Boston did exactly this over 10 years.

New York City: Access-A-Ride

The nation's largest paratransit system — 160,000+ eligible riders, nearly 1 million trips per month.

\$116 → \$40

Cost Per Trip
(E-Hail vs Traditional)

1M

Trips Per Month

90+

Rider Satisfaction
Score

10 min

Average
Wait Time



Multi-provider hybrid model: taxis, TNCs, for-hire vehicles

On-demand and traditional service operate side by side — riders choose what works for each trip

On-demand and rescue services are now core operations, not pilots — recently awarded major tech modernization contract

Portland: TriMet LIFT+

Seamless TNC integration within existing paratransit dispatch — riders may not even know.

1

Rider Requests Trip

Rider calls TriMet or uses online portal
— same process as traditional LIFT
service.

2

Smart Dispatching

Uber's API is integrated into TriMet's
Trapeze system. Rides auto-assigned
to dedicated or Uber based on
optimization.

3

Trip Fulfilled

Rider is matched with a driver and
picked up within minutes. Experience
is seamless.

"I love Uber... on-time performance is great... with Uber I can just drop the trip on and within 15 minutes, it's going to be there."

— John Lewis, Trapeze Group, TriMet Board Meeting Feb 2026

Nashville: WeGo Access on Demand

Voucher-based, multi-provider on-demand paratransit — the subsidy model in action.

How the Voucher Works

- ✓ Rider pays first \$5 copay
- ✓ WeGo subsidizes up to \$30 per ride
- ✓ Rider covers any cost above \$35
- ✓ Up to 100 trips per month allowed
- ✓ On-demand or scheduled in advance
- ✓ Service hours: 4:45am – 1:00am Mon–Sat

Provider Breakdown

April 2024 – April 2025 Trip Data



Nashville WeGo: How the Model Operates

Operational Structure

- ✓ Supplemental on-demand paratransit — not a replacement for core ADA service
- ✓ Multi-provider: Uber handles 47% of trips, other providers handle 53%
- ✓ Riders book on-demand or schedule up to 14 days in advance
- ✓ Service runs 4:45am–1:00am Mon–Sat, 4:45am–11:00pm Sunday
- ✓ Up to 100 trips per month per rider — controls cost while maximizing choice
- ✓ Rider copay: \$5 | WeGo subsidy: up to \$30 | Rider covers overage above \$35

WeGo also runs WeGo Link — a first-mile/last-mile voucher program (\$2 rider fare, \$8 subsidy) connecting riders to 18 transit zones.

Harris County, TX: Shared Balance Model

Innovative ride card system for seniors 65+ and people with disabilities — funded by rider + agency + match.

1

Add Funds

Riders (or agency partners) add money to their Ride Card.

2

60% Match

Harris County increases the balance by 60% — stretching every dollar.

3

On-Demand Ride

Fares covered up to card balance. Rider pays overage from personal payment.

Curb-to-curb service across Harris County — partners include Housing & Community Development and MJM Innovations.

Tampa Bay: PSTA Direct Connect

PSTA and Uber partnership since 2016 — first-mile/last-mile Rider's Choice program. [alternate example, not paratransit]

Program Details

- ✓ \$5 voucher per trip
- ✓ Trips must start or end at 26 eligible transit stops
- ✓ 5am to midnight, 7 days a week
- ✓ Providers: Uber, Lyft, United Taxi, Wheelchair Transport

"We are solving age-old transportation barriers with technology, innovation, and TNCs."

— Brad Miller
Chief Executive Officer, PSTA

Cost & Outcomes Across Major Cities

Pattern: 20–72% cost reduction + maintained or improved satisfaction + ridership growth

City / Program	Traditional Cost/Trip	On-Demand Cost/Trip	Savings	Key Result
Boston (RIDE Flex)	\$56.62	\$15.92	72%	+53% ridership
NYC (E-Hail)	\$116	~\$40	66%	Satisfaction: 85+
Chicago (TAP/RAP)	\$70+	\$32–40	43–54%	4.4M trips (2025)
Nashville (WeGo)	—	\$5 copay	--	100 trips/mo cap

Minnesota: Already Building the Foundation

Metro Micro

General public on-demand microtransit. 5 zones, expanding to 9 by 2027. 67,000+ rides in 2024 — 1,513% growth in 2 years. 100% ADA-accessible fleet.

Carepool

Same-day on-demand rides for Metro Mobility-certified riders. Rider pays \$5, Metro Mobility subsidizes next \$15.

UZURV

Premium on-demand paratransit for Metro Mobility riders since Sept 2025. \$5 copay model.

Minnesota has already proven on-demand works. The foundation exists — and riders are choosing it.

Why On-Demand Paratransit Matters

What riders value — and what Minnesota is already proving



Independence

Book trips on their schedule — not 24 hours in advance



Speed & Reliability

5–15 min waits and 96–98% on-time performance across implementations



Employment Access

Spontaneous travel enables job opportunities — not just medical trips



Accessibility

Phone and app booking both maintained — no digital exclusion



Real-Time Visibility

GPS tracking means riders can see exactly where the vehicle is. No more guessing or anxious waiting.



Flexibility

Control over return trips, timing, and booking method

What Riders Are Saying

"This app makes my life so much better. I don't have to keep calling in. I can see where my driver is."

— Paratransit rider, on-demand service user

"It has given me the chance to get out and do things I couldn't before."

— RIDE Flex user, Boston

"I love Uber... on-time performance is great... I can just drop the trip on and within 15 minutes it's going to be there."

— John Lewis, Trapeze Group (TriMet Board Meeting)

The Opportunity

- ✓ On-demand paratransit is proven — not experimental
- ✓ ~ 20–75% cost savings documented across major cities
- ✓ Riders give great reviews and want more
- ✓ The disability community is asking for this flexibility
- ✓ Multiple models exist — vouchers / subsidy, dispatch, hybrid
- ✓ Minnesota already has the foundation in place

*Other cities have the data. Riders have made their preference clear.
How to bring more flexibility to more Minnesotans?*