



MOBILITY ON DEMAND (MOD) SANDBOX DEMONSTRATION: LOS ANGELES COUNTY AND PUGET SOUND FIRST AND LAST MILE PARTNERSHIP WITH VIA

EVALUATION REPORT

Background

The Los Angeles County and Puget Sound First and Last Mile Partnership with Via project was one of 11 Mobility on Demand (MOD) Sandbox Demonstrations funded by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Within this project, Los Angeles Metro, King County Metro, and Sound Transit partnered with Via to develop and demonstrate a first-mile last-mile (FMLM) system to connect people to rail and bus rapid transit systems within their respective regions.

Fixed-route transit traditionally struggles to deliver robust mobility within auto-oriented environments. This often results in low ridership and high net costs of service delivery. The transportation agencies leading this project faced localized challenges with providing FMLM service to rail transit and bus rapid transit stations. By incorporating FMLM ridesourcing into zones around major transit stations within the Los Angeles and Seattle metropolitan regions, they sought to improve access to and from stations for the surrounding community. The agencies and Via worked together on two analogous pilot programs designed to test the viability of public-private partnerships to deliver the FMLM service. Three transit zones were selected in the Los Angeles region and five zones were selected in the Puget Sound region for the pilot.

Objectives

Through the MOD Sandbox Program, FTA enabled the participating agencies to explore the design of partnerships and systems to deliver an innovative and effective FMLM service. The project objectives were to 1) improve users' accessibility and mobility to and from public transit, 2) increase public transit usage and the number of riders, 3) reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT), greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and congestion, 4) improve mobility for persons with disabilities, 5) improve rider safety, 6) improve the cost efficiency of mobility, and 7) produce lessons learned for future projects.

An independent evaluation was conducted to assess the demonstration impacts and outcomes based on the project goals and objectives. The evaluation explored 13 hypotheses covering mobility, accessibility, public transit ridership, fuel consumption, safety, costs, and lessons learned.

Findings and Conclusions

The evaluation revealed that the program achieved several objectives regarding improvements to user mobility and accessibility, public transit ridership, safety, and cost efficiency but did not reduce VMT, GHGs, or congestion.

This report presents the results of an independent evaluation of the Los Angeles County and Puget Sound First and Last Mile Partnership with Via Demonstration, with lessons learned that potentially can help advance similar initiatives within other transit systems. Survey, travel activity, ridership, cost, and other data, as well as

insights from expert (stakeholder/project partner) interviews were used to evaluate the project. Key findings include the following:

- **The system reduced wait and travel times for users.** Survey data showed that average travel and wait times of users decreased as a result of the system.
- **The system increased public transit ridership.** Survey data found that riders increased their use of public transit stations as a result of the system.
- **The system improved perceptions of safety for users.** Users reported that they felt safer traveling to and from transit stations as a result of the system.
- **The system did not reduce VMT or GHG emissions.** Net VMT and GHG emissions rose as a result of the system's operation.
- **The system offered users mobility at a higher cost efficiency.** The system offered users faster travel at greater cost efficiency relative to a bus.

Benefits

The Los Angeles and Puget Sound MOD Sandbox project was a learning experience for the agencies providing FMLM ridesourcing service to rail transit and bus rapid transit systems. The agencies in the Los Angeles and Puget Sound regions produced valuable lessons in contractual negotiations, service provisions, and system design that can serve future projects. These lessons learned may improve the implementation of FMLM service in support of or in substitution to existing traditional transit services, facilitating connections to the broader public transportation system.

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