



Pomona Valley
Transportation
Authority

A partnership of the cities of Claremont, La Verne, Pomona and San Dimas

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September 8, 2021

**AGENDA
ITEM #6**

MEMORANDUM

To: Pomona Valley Transportation Authority

From: George L. Sparks *GLS* PVRTA Administrator

Subject: **PVRTA Service Evaluation FY 2021**

Recommended Action: *Receive and file the FY 2021 Service Evaluation.*

The pandemic's impact over the last eighteen months fundamentally changed the operating landscape for PVRTA's services. Some of these changes accelerated service trends that were already occurring. This evaluation will focus on identifying these trends, the issues, and opportunities they present, and outlining action plans to address the new environment.

Changes to the Operating Environment

- A. ***Reduced Demand and Limits on Capacity***-The pandemic has had immediate short term impacts, mostly notably the significant reduction in service demand. Demand has been slow to rebuild given the uncertainties around the safety of using public transit. This fact coupled with the limitations on ride sharing required to ensure safety has greatly reduced our productivity and overall ridership. It is not clear if some of the short term changes we have seen will be permanent.
- B. ***Changes to the Type of Get About Service Demand***-The make-up of Get About's ridership has changed. Most of the largest agency customers of Get About, senior centers and adult daycares, such as, Casa Colina have remained closed. It is not certain that all these users will return. The size of groups travelling to senior centers was steadily diminishing even before the pandemic. We expect Get About demand to grow for individual riders traveling to medical appointments, shopping, and similar destinations. This may reduce the need for the large 18-passenger cutaway vehicles that make up most of the Get About fleet.

- C. *Driver Shortage***-Like virtually all transit operators in California, PVTA is struggling with a severe driver shortage. Our dedicated vehicle fleet has a normal driver roster of eighteen to twenty drivers. Our current driver count is thirteen and it has been very difficult to recruit new drivers. First Transit is offering a \$2000 hiring bonus, but applications have been slow. The shortage is even more severe for our cab provider with only a handful of cabs available beyond the six dedicated employee drivers PVTA funds.
- D. *Increased Need for General Public Group Services***-While Get About is seeing less group demand, our group services for the general public, specifically for afterschool and recreation programs are experiencing an increase. As school reopens, we are expecting a sharp increase in demand for our Pomona and Claremont group services. Pomona is working on starting up new programs using funds made available from the pandemic relief bills. A key to the success of these programs will be adequate transportation to allow residents to access these services. At the same time, Claremont's afterschool programs are expected to begin shortly as well. This will place additional stress on an already overstretched system.
- E. *Long Term Threats to the Cab Industry***-The cab industry is facing some systemic issues that could threaten the long term viability of cabs as a service option for PVTA. First, given the state the labor market driving a cab is much less attractive option than in the past, particularly considering the competition for driver from services like Uber and Lyft. Additionally, Proposition 22 which serves to protect the TNCs from their drivers being classified as employees, offers no such protections for the cab industry.
- F. *The Need for First Mile Last Mile Solutions***-PVTA staff believes that along with the increased demand for group services that focus on youth, the arrival of the Gold Line will create a need for first mile/ last mile transportation options. These services may be provided utilizing a mobile app on a demand response service operated by PVTA or by utilizing services, such as, Uber or Lyft.
- G. *The Move to Zero Emissions***-Despite the disruptions caused by the pandemic, the mandate to move to zero emissions remains. PVTA will need to submit a rollout plan for this transition by July 2023 and begin acquiring zero emission vehicles in 2026. Converting to zero emissions is a particular challenge for PVTA, given that we do not own a facility and do not have access to much of the funding available to regional operators.

FY 2022 Action Plan

Based on the issues identified by PVTA staff, we are planning to focus overall service improvement efforts in the following areas.

- A. *Address the Immediate Driver Shortage***-Our immediate focus is on addressing the issues related to the driver shortage and the lack of cabs. We are working with our contractor to increase driver recruitment efforts and are evaluating the addition of two more dedicated employee drivers for the minivans. First Transit is working on securing additional subcontractors to supplement our service resources. Currently, we are trying to work with our riders to move their pickup times for discretionary trips to the less busy parts of the day and to provide our riders with realistic estimates of the wait times for our demand response services. Given the expected increased demand for groups service with school starting we are working with the contractor to reserve capacity in the schedules of our larger vehicles to meet the anticipated need.
- B. *Evaluate Get About Service Demand***-We expect to see a significantly different set of Get About service needs as we emerge from the pandemic. Some of our agency clients that generated large groups may not return to operation and other will likely have very different needs. To prepare for these demands, PVRTA will be surveying its agency and individual riders to gain a better picture of the needs. We will also be analyzing the new ridership patterns to identify areas of demand.
- C. *Pursue Alternative Service Models***-PVRTA plans to reassess its current service model to identify ways to supplement our existing resources. PVRTA is working with its contractor First Transit to secure additional subcontractors, to serve transportation needs that are normally met via cab based services. We will also be evaluating making use of services, such as, Lyft or Via to serve portions of our service demand. One limitation that we face is the lack of accessible vehicle capacity on services like Lyft. These services may be very effective for the general public and ambulatory seniors, but we want to avoid creating a two tier system in which one group of riders receives a higher level of service than another.
- D. *Move Forward with Technological Service Enhancements***-In FY 2021 we were able to integrate all our service operations to the Ecolane platform. This enables us to add a mobile app that will allow riders to book trips, check on ETAs and pay their fare for all PVRTA services. Planned future enhancements include adding PVRTA service data via GTFS-FLEX to allow our information to be available on platforms like Google Transit.
- E. *Reassess Fleet Needs***-We have seen the need to serve large groups in the Get About service decline steadily over the past several years. There is still considerable demand for services for groups of the general public, like youth. Because of the decline in overall demand from large groups, PVRTA plans to reassess its fleet needs to see if a fleet mix that includes larger cutaways to serve groups and makes use more smaller vehicles, such as, minivans or eight passenger vans to serve most other needs. These smaller vehicles have the advantage of not being subject to CARB's zero emission mandate. It would not be our intent to avoid the move to zero emissions, but to reduce our obligations until such time as zero emission vehicles and infrastructure become more affordable. These smaller units have the added

advantage of not requiring drivers to possess a Class B license which has been a barrier in recruiting additional drivers.

F. Develop a Zero Emission Strategy-The California Air Resources Board’s (CARB) Innovative Clean Transit (ICT) rule requires small operators like PVRTA to submit a ZEB Roll Out plan by July 2023. We have set aside funds in the FY 2022 budget for the development of the plan. We want to make use of the planning process to evaluate alternative strategies to meet the ICT’s requirements. The planning process will include an assessment of the vehicle options available and on the horizon, and the identification of available sources of funds. Among the strategies we plan to evaluate are:

- 1) *Acquire a facility capable of supporting an EV infrastructure*
- 2) *Have our operations contractor provide a facility capable supporting ZEBs*
- 3) *Co-location with a member city or other agency*
- 4) *Reduce the size of a portion of the fleet vehicles to reduce our initial ZEB obligation*

Get About Operating Data

	<u>FY 2018</u>	<u>FY 2019</u>	<u>FY 2020</u>	<u>FY 2021</u>
Ridership	136, 120	122,661	99, 962	46,196
Wheelchair Rides	27,326	23,451	20,142	9,101
Cost Per Pass.	\$23.63	\$27.42	\$31.03	\$56.38
Total Expense	\$3,207,159	\$3,363,234	\$3,101,488	\$2,604,427

Ridership for Get About was about 38% of FY 2019 levels. While costs declined by 23% or over \$750,000 compared to FY 2019, the cost per passenger was about double due to the need to maintain most staff and the fixed costs related to the facilities and maintaining the vehicles. The challenge for the upcoming year is to identify the changes in Get About’s rider make up and reshape the service to meet those needs. This effort will be led by our mobility managers who will be conducting outreach to identify transportation needs. We will then work with our contractors to adjust our service model to meet them.

Get About Service Quality

	<u>FY2018</u>	<u>FY 2019</u>	<u>FY 2020</u>	<u>FY 2021</u>	<u>Standard</u>
On Time	91.5%	84.5%	90.3%	91.5%	92%
No-Shows	2.5%	3.4%	3.4%	5.4%	<3%
Complaints	23	97	74	31	<25

Get About's overall service quality was acceptable during the last year. The recent growth in demand as the pandemic receded and the current labor situation will require us to carefully manage demand to serve the maximum number of riders and maintain a high level of service quality.

One Step Over the Line

	<u>FY 2018</u>	<u>FY 2019</u>	<u>FY2020</u>	<u>FY 2021</u>
Ridership	6,319	4,822	3,325	2,039
Total Expense	\$154,742	\$145,404	\$95,556	\$64,757
On Time	92.3%	68.1%	87.3%	84.1%

Our One Step Over the Line program has a unique challenge in that most of destinations it serves are at a distance from our service area which makes maintaining on time performance for the return trips a particular challenge. We plan to explore a way to address this problem, possibly by making use of cab providers in the western portion of San Bernardino County or trying to attract cabs that normally serve the Ontario Airport.

Ready Now

	<u>FY 2018</u>	<u>FY 2019</u>	<u>FY 2020</u>	<u>FY 2021</u>
Ridership	22,173	17,587	14,420	9,002
Total Expense	\$305,675	\$254,133	\$207,954	\$141,146
On Time	95%	87.7%	90%	90.4%

Ready Now which is a demand response service like Claremont Dial-a-Ride or San Dimas Dial-a-Cab. The key performance measure for Ready Now and similar services is the average wait time. If we can shorten wait times it will attract additional riders, which in turn generally attracts more cabs into the service area. The challenge for the coming year is to attract sufficient cab resources whether from the current provider or by securing additional subcontractors to shorten wait times.

Claremont Dial-a-Ride

	<u>FY 2018</u>	<u>FY2019</u>	<u>FY2020</u>	<u>FY 2021</u>
Ridership	31,862	26,667	20,341	7,114
Total Expense	\$400,177	\$376,387	\$297,984	\$193,371
On-Time	94%	80%	93%	92%

The cab portion of the Claremont service has the same challenge as the Ready Now program. For the Claremont group service, the key factor will be our ability to secure enough vehicle resources during peak periods to meet the potential demand. Our focus in this area will be to try to reserve adequate service resources by stepping up driver recruitment, seeking subcontractor and using our cabs as minivan to serve one and two person trips as much as possible.

Pomona Group Service

	<u>FY 2018</u>	<u>FY 2019</u>	<u>FY 2020</u>	<u>FY 2021</u>
Ridership	3,966	3,326	2,751	149
Total Expense	\$33,103	\$37,030	\$41,762	\$35,203

The Pomona Group service had almost no service demand in FY 2021. The Rio Rancho Shuttle continued in service but had very little ridership. We have discontinued Rio Rancho service until conditions allows us to properly promote it to rebuild ridership. We began operating group services for youth in July and provided service for some elementary and middle school students from Roosevelt elementary to other schools that offered special programming. Based on our discussions with Pomona staff we expect significant service demand from Pomona groups in FY 2022.

San Dimas Dial-a-Cab

	<u>FY 2018</u>	<u>FY 2019</u>	<u>FY 2020</u>	<u>FY2021</u>
Ridership	24,396	18,026	14,602	7,741
Total Expense	\$348,617	\$306,328	\$264,010	\$195,157
On Time	94%	77%	89%	90%

We expect demand to grow for Dial-a-Cab throughout the coming fiscal year. Our challenge will be securing adequate cab resources to maintain acceptable wait times to meet the potential demand.