

REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL

DATE: OCTOBER 25, 2023

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: NATHAN HAMBURGER, CITY MANAGER

**BY: STEPHANIE POZOS, MANAGEMENT ANALYST
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SUBJECT: DIAL-A-RIDE PROGRAM AND TRANSPORTATION SERVICES ANALYSIS

The City Council requested that a detailed analysis of the existing Dial-A-Ride Program be provided as part of the FY 2023/24 Council Goals. The goal would be to understand the efficiency of the service and to consider options and alternatives, if necessary. The current Dial-A-Ride Program has been in operation for more than thirty years offering door-to-door transportation services to the general public.

The purpose of this report is to present the overview and summary of the recent analysis completed. The information will include an inquiry of the recent survey results, ADA requirements, the service that the City of Thousand Oaks provides, and the AH-GO service provided through Spare Labs, Inc. (Spare).

The research and analysis of the City's Dial-A-Ride transportation service involves a comprehensive examination of various aspects, addressing both the benefits and challenges associated with the City's transportation programs. It is crucial to assess the societal impact of these programs, considering how they enhance mobility for individuals with limited access to transportation options. The survey examined user satisfaction levels, emphasizing factors like promptness, reliability, convenience, and affordability. The survey was available from June through August 2023 and was conducted and available online to all service users and distributed in-person to current Dial-A-Ride users. There were a total of 51 responses; 22 respondents were individuals who have used the current service and 29 respondents were individuals who have never used the current service. It is important to allow individuals who have not used the service to participate, to understand what the community is looking for in a transportation service and if there is a reason why they don't currently use the transportation service.

The survey results were shared with the City's transportation consultant and made the following observations:

- The survey respondents were mostly adults 65 or older.
- There are a few regular riders, who use the service daily or weekly.

- Riders are not satisfied with the wait times.
- Service was not offered as on-demand.
- There is interest in weekend service.
- Medical and Dental appointments are the most common trip types.
- Most individuals who completed the survey prefer to call in by phone to schedule their ride.
- Respondents commented on being able to rely on the service for their appointments.
- Respondents relied on friendly drivers.

The survey results demonstrate that it is important to keep a cost-effective service that many seniors and individuals with disabilities rely on while looking at providing an enhanced on-demand service.

The level of service provided to people with disabilities, including those who use wheelchairs, must be equivalent to that provided to people without disabilities per Federal Law requirements, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The service characteristics for determining whether the service is equivalent are response time, fares, geographic area of service, hours and days of service, restrictions or priorities based on trip purpose, availability of information and reservations capability, any constraints on capacity or service availability. Providing this level of service must be incorporated into all aspects of the program.

On September 25, 2019, the City Council awarded a contract to the City of Thousand Oaks to assist the City with the provision of paratransit services (Dial-A-Ride) for Agoura Hills residents and visitors and the unincorporated area of Agoura Hills within the County of Los Angeles. The City of Thousand Oaks oversees MV Transportation, who handles operations, reservations, and dispatching. The program is a public dial-a-ride, which means it is open to people of all ages. It also provides service in what is called a "door-to-door" format, where people who need assistance going from their front door to the vehicle, and vice versa, are provided with assistance (not dropped off down the street). The program has been in existence for almost forty years. Currently, the program sees, on average, a little over 200 riders per month. Most of those riders are adults over the age of 50. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, public transportation ridership has taken a significant hit, causing numerous challenges for programs across the state. To overcome these obstacles and meet the evolving needs of commuters, staff have been tasked with analyzing the service and identified several options for transportation program services.

On December 14, 2022, the City Council awarded a contract to Spare to institute an enhancement to the existing transportation program and offer after-hours and later evening services for residents and the general public. Spare partners with Lyft, for dispatching and administration, and for the provision of vehicles/drivers, thereby providing a full turnkey system. The service also includes one dedicated wheelchair accessible vehicle (required for services using public transportation funding), provided by Ventura Transit Systems. The service offers an app-based appointment feature, as well as a standard telephone call-in feature. Spare and its partners oversee reservations,

dispatching, and deployment of vehicles. The implementation of the enhanced service has proven to be an effective measure in improving efficiency and significantly reducing wait times for ride requests. Not only does this efficiency foster a positive customer experience by minimizing wait times, but the enhanced service also surpasses conventional methods by offering an easy user experience characterized by seamless booking via the mobile app.

The analysis completed by staff identified the need for a service that provides shorter wait times. Staff recommends changing the current Dial-a-Ride service with the City of Thousand Oaks to seniors and disabled only; to continue to provide the service to individuals who depend on transportation that is scheduled in advance and rely on door-to-door assistance. The service with the City of Thousand Oaks is the most cost-efficient service available at the time. Aside from the long wait times, there are members of the community who rely on the Dial-a-Ride service. However, staff recommends increasing the hours with Spare to continue to grow demand for Lyft drivers in the area; therefore, increasing the reliability of the service over time. Increasing the hours of service with Spare will also allow individuals who are accustomed to using the traditional Dial-a-Ride service to become familiar with a new service. Due to the higher cost of the on-demand service and the Proposition A revenue the City receives, there is a limit on the number of hours that can be added. Staff recommends increasing the AH-GO fare cost to \$2.00 per one way trip per person for trips into or out of the City of Agoura Hills and Malibu Lake and \$4.00 per one-way trip for trips outside of city limits due to the higher cost of providing the on-demand service and keeping the fares for Dial-a-Ride for seniors and disabled users 1.50 per one way trip per person for trips into or out of Agoura Hills and Malibu Lake and \$3.00 per one way trip for trips outside of city limits.

Staff recommends aligning with the City of Thousand Oaks service where the City pays on a per ride basis for Seniors and Disabled rides and, adding hours will only have an additional cost when individuals use the service. Also, based on survey results, there is interest in service over the weekend. Most popular weekdays are Monday and Friday.

Therefore, the following would be recommended Service Hours:

Dial-a-Ride – City of Thousand Oaks

5:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on weekdays, and 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on weekends

AH-GO – Spare Labs Inc.

2:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Thursday through Saturday, and 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Sunday and Monday. Hours can be modified based on actual usage.

Moreover, it is necessary to investigate the financial implications of transportation programs by assessing cost-effectiveness in comparison to alternative transportation solutions. The city receives Proposition A funding, which is a half-cent sales tax measure approved in 1980 by Los Angeles County voters dedicated to funding transportation services and benefiting public transit. The City also receives an incentive grant from the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA), funded by

Proposition A Incentive funds. The City also uses Proposition A funds to provide transportation services for Recreation programs, such as senior excursions, and the Summer Beach Bus service. The City works with the County of Los Angeles to provide services to unincorporated areas and receives reimbursement from the County for services provided in those areas. The estimated FY 2023-24 contract cost for operating the Dial-A-Ride Seniors and Disabled service through the City of Thousand Oaks is approximately \$161,800. The City pays the City of Thousand Oaks on a per-ride basis. If Spare were to replace the City of Thousand Oaks and provide Dial-A-Ride Seniors and Disabled Service, the estimated annual contract cost is approximately \$743,000. This cost is exclusive of the cost of operating the on-demand service for the General Public using Lyft services. A major part of the contract cost is the required dedicated wheelchair accessible vehicle; the City pays on a per-hour basis for the dedicated vehicle.

Currently, the City receives a specified amount of Proposition A revenue and Incentive Grant Funds each fiscal year. Based on current projections from LACMTA and budget analysis with the City's Finance Department, staff projects a sustainable program would need to remain below \$575,000 each year. The hybrid model, which includes the City of Thousand Oaks and Spare would cost the City approximately \$555,000 annually. The all-inclusive model providing services through Spare Labs, Inc. would cost the City \$769,246.00 each year, which is not a sustainable model.

Therefore, Staff recommends providing Dial-A-Ride service for seniors and disabled through the City of Thousand Oaks from Monday through Sunday for a total of 101 hours per week while continuing AH-GO as an enhanced On-Demand service for a total of up to 40 hours per week.

This item has been reviewed and discussed with the Community Services Subcommittee.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no additional fiscal impact to the City Council 2023-24 Adopted Budget, as funds were appropriated for the Dial-A-Ride service in the Proposition A – Transportation Contract Services account, 060-4530-552080.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff respectfully recommends the City Council:

1. Approve Dial-A-Ride service for seniors and disabled through the City of Thousand Oaks from Monday through Sunday for a total of 101 hours per week.
2. Approve AH-GO service for general public as an enhanced on-demand service and increasing the hours based on budget appropriation.

3. Approve fares for the traditional Dial-A-Ride program through the City of Thousand Oaks to remain the same at \$1.50 per one way trip per person for trips into or out of Agoura Hills and Malibu Lake and \$3.00 per one way trip for trips outside of city limits.
4. Approve an increase to fares for the AH-GO on-demand service to \$2.00 per one way trip per person for trips into or out of the City of Agoura Hills and Malibu Lake and \$4.00 per one-way trip for trips outside of city limits.