



Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County Creates Efficiencies with FlexRIDE Microtransit

Challenge

RTC faced inefficiency and unsustainable service within two routes on its RIDE bus system due to low ridership levels, but still had passengers who needed to access the community.

Solution

In partnership with MTM Transit, RTC introduced FlexRIDE, a microtransit system that replaced the inefficient routes with on-demand service using minibus vehicles.

Results

Higher passenger satisfaction and tripled ridership levels, while maintaining the same cost per passenger experienced on the previous fixed routes.



Challenge

The Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) of Washoe County serves a ridership of seven and a half million every year in the Reno and Sparks, Nevada areas, as well as in unincorporated areas of Washoe County. Through its RIDE fixed route system, RTC provides residents and visitors with safe, reliable bus service.

Historically, RTC had two routes east of Iron Horse Shopping Center that faced continually low ridership. With near empty buses on those routes, RTC sought a more efficient way to provide service to passengers who needed to access that area of Sparks for employment, education, medical, and shopping needs—without the cost of operating traditional bus routes.

Solution

To solve for its ridership concerns in Sparks, RTC turned to a growing trend in transit: microtransit, a form of demand-response transportation that uses minibus vehicles. In November 2019, RTC partnered with MTM Transit to enhance its public transit system with the addition of its FlexRIDE microtransit service. As RTC's existing partner for ACCESS Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit services, our staff were already familiar with the service area and minibus vehicles, making us the ideal collaborative partner for this innovative new initiative.

FlexRIDE replaced two traditional fixed routes with a microtransit service area leveraging smaller, more efficient, and more flexible vehicles instead of traditional public transit buses. With FlexRIDE, passengers have a convenient, cost-effective ridesharing option that offers them greater flexibility while traveling and commuting. Because FlexRIDE has an on-demand option, passengers can request pick-up at any time, from anywhere, instead of having to be at a bus stop at a set time.

Rather than connecting to multiple buses, passengers are now able to request curbside pick-up from wherever they like, and are dropped off at the curbside location closest to their destination within the microtransit service area. Passengers can request rides using a mobile app, by calling RTC directly, or by walking up to a vehicle on the street. Once an on-demand trip is scheduled, a passenger's ride arrives within 15 minutes. The passenger can track their ride's arrival in real-time using the app. Service is available seven days a week, and fares are the same as standard RTC RIDE fixed route fares.



Results

Microtransit has been extremely successful for RTC, allowing their service to remain relevant even as passengers' expectations for transit continues to evolve. The results RTC has experienced through FlexRIDE include:

- Tripled ridership while maintaining the same cost per passenger experienced on the previous fixed routes due to efficiencies gained by utilizing smaller, more efficient vehicles
- An average of 3,715 passengers per month served through scheduled and on-demand microtransit trips
- Improved capacity to serve a greater number of passengers in a larger geographic area
- Increased passenger satisfaction due to more flexibility, the capability to request pick-up and drop-off exactly where they want to go, and engaged drivers that had already completed sensitivity and customer service training through MTM Transit's paratransit service

Due the success of FlexRIDE in Sparks, as well as in response to the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the way passengers utilize public transit, RTC and MTM Transit introduced a second FlexRIDE service area in May 2020 in North Valleys. The North Valleys service area replaced an existing route that served several shopping centers, apartment complexes, schools, and residential areas. Additionally, in October 2020, the Sparks service area was expanded to include Spanish Spring, and a third new service area was added to serve Somerset/Verdi. FlexRIDE is a true success story in the growing microtransit trend as it helps passengers gain greater access to their community on their own schedule.

**All data based on pre-COVID ridership.*



