



U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Transit Administration



# Mobility on Demand (MOD) Sandbox Demonstration: Puget Sound First/Last Mile Partnership with Via

## *Final Report*

### Background

The MOD Sandbox Demonstration Program provides a venue through which integrated MOD concepts and solutions supported through local partnerships are demonstrated in real-world settings. This MOD Sandbox project tested the viability of a public-private partnership with a Transportation Network Company (TNC), Via Transportation, in two markets, LA County and the Puget Sound region. Service in the Puget Sound region, called Via to Transit, was a pilot on-demand service that connected riders to and from five transit hubs in the Seattle area. This report presents the results of the Puget Sound MOD Sandbox Demonstration.

### Objectives

The Via to Transit pilot project was designed to achieve four goals— improve mobility by expanding access to transit; test how to develop a partnership with a private sector mobility company, integrating TNC services with existing transit services; broaden TNC access to a wider audience, including populations without smartphones, those who need wheelchair-accessible vehicles, unbanked populations, low-income populations, people of color, and populations with limited English proficiency; and inform best practices and FTA guidance for public-private partnerships and novel transit service delivery models.

### Findings and Conclusions

*Via to Transit enhanced access for passengers with travel disabilities, including those who require wheelchair-accessible vehicles, people with limited English proficiency, unbanked populations, and people without access to smartphones, thus providing access to service to all populations.*

The project achieved its goals through its project design, which included a call center, rudimentary fare payment integration, a partnership structure that provided for robust project monitoring of data through project evaluation, provision of wheelchair-accessible vehicle service on-platform, delivery of robust marketing and community engagement in multiple languages, and establishment and maintenance of clear and consistent communication channels among agencies to be flexible to changes as they emerged throughout the pilot project.

A project overview and impetus, goals, implementation, and evaluation of the project are presented in the final project report. Selected findings of the study include the following:

- On-demand first/last mile service can complement fixed-route transit and facilitate new transit riders.
- Contiguous service areas increase efficiency of service and allow for flexibility.
- On-demand first/last mile services can be relatively cost-effective.
- Providing equitable access is important and should be addressed earlier and more broadly and promoted.
- Leveraging other agency contracts can expedite contracting.
- Robust data and evaluation are important for assessing efficacy.

## Benefits

The Puget Sound Via to Transit pilot successfully demonstrated that transit agencies can improve and increase access to transit by integrating TNC services and broaden TNC access to people without smartphones, those who need wheelchair-accessible vehicles, unbanked populations, and populations with limited English proficiency. Although significant effort and inter-agency, intra-agency, and public-private coordination were required to provide this new service, the pilot provided valuable lessons on how transit agencies can leverage on-demand first/last mile services to enhance mobility.

## Project Information

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