FTA Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility Grant - FINAL REPORT





Prepared By:



Funded By:



July 2024

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Executive Summary

SouthWest Transit (SWT) requested and awarded funds under FTA's Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility (ICAM) Program in 2018 to buy vehicles to operate SW Prime MD service, a non-emergency medical transportation service, an addition to SW Prime -the existing on-demand microtransit service. SWT launched the SW Prime MD pilot program in December 2023 to address the transportation needs for non-emergency medical trips within its service area, encompassing communities such as Chaska, Chanhassen, Eden Prairie, Carver, and Victoria, MN. This innovative microtransit service aimed to ensure reliable and timely transportation to medical appointments for residents, particularly the elderly and those with disabilities. Leveraging SWT's existing infrastructure and partnerships, SWT successfully implemented SW Prime MD, achieving high customer satisfaction and meeting or exceeding performance metrics set forth in the project plan. This data in this report pertains to the ICAM grant period starting from December 2023 through June 2024.

Key achievements, as a result of adding vehicles to the fleet, include:

- Over 99% of trips were completed on time, ensuring passengers arrived ahead of or within 5 minutes of their scheduled medical appointments.
- Fulfillment of 100% of requested trips which demonstrated service reliability.
- Average passenger load of 2.0 per service hour, which is less than the target of the project which was 3.0 passengers per service hour. However, since all requested trips were fulfilled, it's necessary to increase ridership demand to increase passenger load per service hour.
- Excellent customer satisfaction ratings with an average score of 5.0 out of 5.0.
- Partnership with Ridgeview Medical Center, subsidizing \$5 fare per medical appointment to the facility, which enhanced affordability for patients.

SW Prime MD not only met its operational goals but also laid the groundwork for sustainable expansion and replication in similar communities. The project's success underscores SWT's commitment to enhancing community health outcomes through accessible transportation solutions.

Introduction

Background

In 1986, the SouthWest Minneapolis suburbs of Chaska, Chanhassen, and Eden Prairie chose to opt out of the Metropolitan Transit Commission transit system in accordance with Minnesota State Statutes. Under a joint powers agreement between the three cities, they created their own transit system, SouthWest Metro Transit.

Now known as SouthWest Transit, we continue to be the public transit agency for Chaska, Chanhassen, Eden Prairie, and neighboring cities such as Carver and Victoria. We are proud to provide service from each of our 3 conveniently located transit stations to and from Downtown Minneapolis, the University of Minnesota, Normandale Community College, and Best Buy Headquarters. In addition, we offer SouthWest Prime, an on-demand rideshare service to and from select locations and/or services.

Each year we also select concerts, sporting events, and adventures like the Minnesota Zoo to serve our communities and provide safe, reliable transportation to allow you to sit back, relax, and enjoy the ride.

At SouthWest Transit, we "connect our customers from where they are to where they want to go."

Our vision statement is "SouthWest Transit is the leading provider of innovative transit solutions that improve livability and enhance economic opportunity in the communities we serve"

Our mission statement is "We provide a premium experience for the southwest Twin Cities through safe, reliable, and cost-effective transit that builds community and connects our customers from where they are to where they want to go."

Need Identification

SWT's on-demand service serves five major communities, which include Eden Prairie, Chanhassen, Chaska, Carver, and Victoria. Collectively, the total population of SW Prime service areas was 118,588 in 2016 (the year when the grant was requested) which has been growing and is projected to grow well into the future. The area is projected to grow by 16.6% by 2030 and 34.1% by 2040. With the populations of all five communities in the Southwest Prime service area expected to see a significant increase over the next 20 years, demonstrating the need for additional services like SW Prime MD. Not only is the population projected to grow, the population in and around the Southwest Prime service area is aging with age cohorts 50 and older seeing increases in percentage of overall population while younger age cohorts 40 and younger generally are decreasing in terms of overall percentage of population. The shift in demographic change is also

evidenced by the comparative analysis of the survey conducted in 2019 and 2023 among SW Prime passengers, which showed an increase in households with seniors and riders aged over 65 years old from 2019 to 2023 (see Figure-1). This significant demographic change demonstrates the increase in aging population which emphasizes the importance of microtransit services and the need for additional services designed to accommodate the transportation disadvantaged population, especially elderly and people with disabilities.





Figure 1- Comparative Demographic Data of SW Prime Riders between 2019 and 2023, Showing Increase in Elderly Population in SW Prime Service Area.

SouthWest Transit is cognizant of the fact that its service area and surrounding communities are aging and is expecting an increase in demand for more local demand-response services aimed at retiring senior populations. As an innovative and successful public transit agency, SouthWest Transit acknowledges the locally adopted Public Transit and Human Services Transportation Coordination Action Plan developed by the Metropolitan Council for the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area and the identified gaps between current services and needs as outlined by the plan. Of these recognized gaps, SouthWest Transit seeks to address the need for expanding transportation services for the elderly and persons with disabilities beyond what is required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), ultimately creating a more inclusive and accessible community. In response to the population growth trend, SWT took a proactive approach and planned to implement a dedicated service to meet the growing demand for non-emergency medical transportation, aligning with anticipated mobility needs in the region.

Project Description: What is SW Prime MD?

SouthWest Transit has been operating its pilot program 'SW Prime MD' for several years since 2022, a pioneering microtransit service for non-emergency medical trips from anywhere within the current SW Prime service area to hospitals, medical centers, and clinics in and around the SouthWest designated service area. The service is available to anyone in the current SW Prime microtransit service area (see Figure-2) and can pick up passengers anywhere a ride is requested within the service area to provide a ride to and from designated medical facilities. Riders can schedule their rides up to 14 days in advance online or over the phone, making sure riders got to their medical appointment on time with a reliable mode of transportation. When riders are done with their medical appointments and are ready to leave, they should request an on-demand ride from SW Prime MD online or over the phone and a vehicle will be there to pick them up within a few minutes.





Figure 2 - Different Types of Vehicles Used for SW Prime MD Service

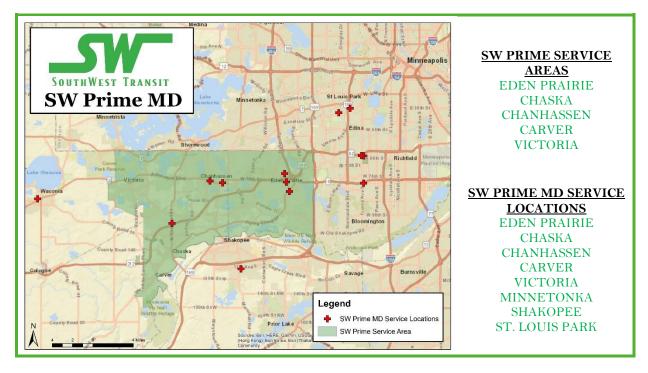


Figure 3- Map Showing SW Prime Service Areas and SW Prime MD Service Locations

The exception to SW Prime MD regarding advance ride requests prior to medical appointment aimed at ensuring an on-time arrival for medical appointments. The main goals of the SW Prime MD service were:

- Assuring on-time arrival for non-emergency medical appointment
- Not too long return trip wait time, despite appointment fluctuations
- Average wait time of less than 30 minutes.
- Provision of real time vehicle tracking to customers who book their ride online, to update them with exact pickup times and pick-up locations.
- Accommodating mobility devices and using high-quality/high-amenity vehicles for safe transportation

FTA's ICAM Grant

Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility (ICAM) Projects are funded by Section 3006(b) of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act (Pub. L. 114-94, Dec. 4, 2015). SouthWest Transit submitted an ICAM grant application in 2016 FTA and was awarded with the ICAM grant for this pilot project in 2018. Originally during the grant application, SWT needed funding for vehicles to launch the pilot project. The vehicles were estimated to be procured by the first quarter of 2020 to start the service in May through December 2020. However, the supply-

chain disruption due to COVID-19 caused delay in vehicle procurement. So, SWT received five Ford Transit vehicles in November 2023 through this grant, which covered the cost of the vehicles with the 80 percent ICAM contribution to 20 percent local match.

Although the procurement of the vehicles was delayed, this grant nurtured the inception of planning for this project, and we launched the project in 2022 with the existing resources of SouthWest Transit. The additional five vehicles in the SWT's system, through FTA's ICAM grant for this project in 2023, strengthened the existing SW Prime MD Service which enhanced the accessibility and mobility for transportation disadvantaged population others for non-emergency medical trips. The long-term goal of the SW Prime MD project was to maintain a successful and sustainable service that compares to the success of SW Prime. As the service establishes itself, SWT continues to use the FTA granted vehicles for this service and a service area expansion will be considered that may serve as a model for other agencies both regionally and nationally. SWT will ensure the long-term sustainability of the SW Prime MD service by ensuring future SWT operating funds are dedicated to the service in order to ensure its continued success.

Key Partnership

SouthWest Transit reached out to various medical facilities in and around the service area seeking partnership for SW Prime MD services. SWT sent requests for the letter of support (see appendix 1) asking various medical facilities in the region to commit to being a strong partner with SouthWest Transit in helping to provide a safe, reliable and innovative transportation option to their patients. SWT was able to build partnership with Ridgeview Medical Center, where Ridgeview provided a \$5 subsidy for all customers riding to a Ridgeview facility. By extending partnership opportunities with various medical facilities, SW Prime MD was able to provide greater health care access to a majority of those within the service area, as well as arranging a financial support from these medical facilities to subsidize the cost of riding.

Implementation

SouthWest Transit submitted an ICAM grant application in 2016 FTA and was awarded with the ICAM grant for this pilot project in 2018. SWT received five Ford Transit vehicles in November 2023 through this grant, which covered the cost of the vehicles with the 80 percent ICAM contribution to 20 percent local match. SWT launched the pilot project in 2022 with the existing resources.

Leveraging Existing Resources:

While SW Prime MD was a unique service for non-emergency medical visits, it can be viewed internally as an extension of the current SW Prime service, drawing on resources already in place for SouthWest Transit's On-Demand Microtransit service i.e. SouthWest Prime since July of 2015. Besides the five vehicles awarded through the ICAM grant, most of the current SW Prime infrastructure was utilized to operate SW Prime MD. The resources utilized include Spare Launch, the scheduling software currently used for SW Prime, to manage the service. Spare Launch features include dispatching capability, routing through driver apps, real time vehicle tracking, ridership and location analytics, as well as daily metric reports and manifests. From a customer point of view, the current software offers easy online booking, vehicle tracking, automatic notifications for driver assignments and driver arrival, and the ability to provide direct feedback through the application. Additionally, SW Prime MD drew upon the same driver pool and support staff that is being used for Express and SW Prime services today, which included operational oversight, administrative oversight, and high-quality customer service to ensure adequate resources for a reliable and quality service for riders. The vehicles added through the ICAM grant increased the resources in terms of vehicles which enabled strengthening the SW Prime MD and enhancing the service level for SW Prime MD. Hence, SW Prime MD joined the fold with existing service and the brand that SouthWest Transit has cultivated over the years.

Outreach and Marketing:

The project began with a strong, targeted, omnichannel approach for the marketing and community outreach campaign to local medical and senior living facilities. Through Travel Trainings, the marketing and community engagement team developed relationships with those in the community, building trust and teaching people how to use the service in-person through presentations and demonstrations. Through utilizing the app option or direct calls to customer service, the program approached outreach with accessibility in mind. Using both digital and print Business to Customers-B2C marketing, including flyers (see appendix-2), social media, website content, station monitors, vehicle signage, cross-promotions, and more, SWT ensured accessibility for all who could be served with SW Prime MD recognizing the different ways people obtain information

and learn. B2B partnerships with community stakeholders supplemented B2C efforts allowing those in the community to further distribute the availability of SW Prime MD through their own marketing channels increasing reach and effectiveness of the campaign. Insights were gleaned through website data, i.e. google analytics, and social media to understand messaging efficacy to update as needed to engage the community and encourage the use of the service. SWT also worked with its project partners (see letters of support attachment) to help market the service and implement it with high ridership.





Figure 4-Photographs showing Travel Training for SW Prime MD Service in Senior Housing

Service Operation:

The SW Prime MD service was started in 2022. The vehicles procured through this grant were used for SW Prime MD service from December 2023 through June 2024. The vehicles procured through this grant are still in operation and we plan to use it till their usable life. SWT would like to keep this service in operation to enhance access to health care and improve mobility. The service hour for SW Prime MD service was 5 am through 7 pm on the weekdays, with no service during the weekend. The major destinations of SW Prime MD Service included various medical facilities like Ridgeview Medical Center and Clinics, Two Twelve Medical center, Park Nicollet Clinic, North Memorial Clinic, St. Francis Regional Medical Center, Methodist Hospital, Fairview Southdale Hospital, Lakeview Clinic, Allina Clinic, TRIA Orthopedic Center, etc. (shown in Figure-4). The heatmaps (Figure-5 and Figure-6) also show the major pickup and drop-off locations of SW Prime MD service. The fare of the ride was made consistent with the current fare policy for SW Prime service, which is \$5 per trip one way. Through SWT's partnership with Ridgeview Medical Center, the \$5 fare for the trip to any Ridgeview facility was subsidized by Ridgeview, but the patient was responsible for the fare of the return trip. Meanwhile, if there was a Personal Care Assistant (PCA) of the patient, his/her ride was made free of cost.

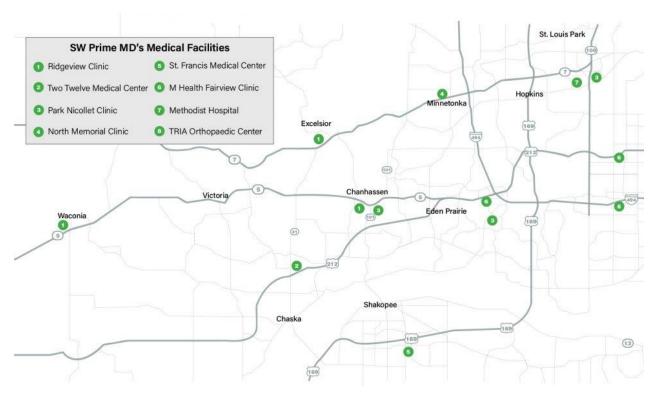


Figure 5-Image Showing Major Service Destinations of SW Prime MD Service

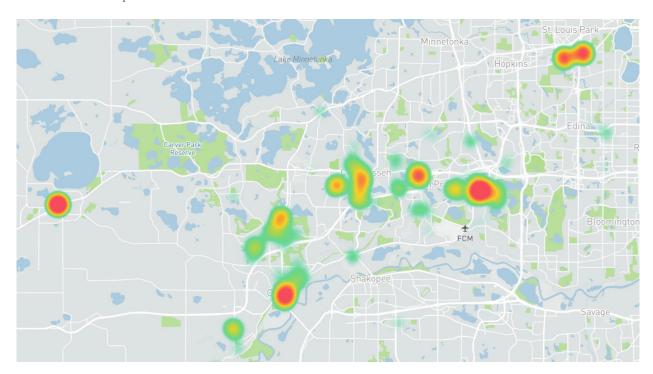


Figure 6- Pickup Heatmap of SW Prime MD Service

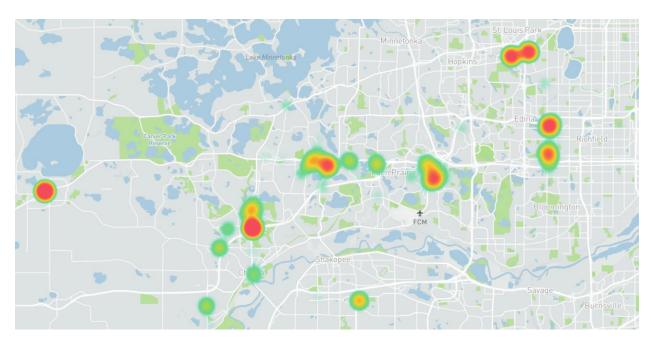


Figure 7- Drop-off Heatmap of SW Prime MD Service

Performance Measures

SWT set forth the performance measures for the system efficiency at the beginning of the service, which aimed to be closely monitored as the project progresses. SW Prime MD was to be compared to and held to the same standards of service efficiency as SW Prime is. These measures/standards include a subsidy per passenger cost of \$10.00 or lower, a passenger load of 3.0 or above per service hour, dropping off passengers ahead of their scheduled medical appointment (no later than 5 minutes), fulfill at least 80 percent of the requested trips, customer satisfaction score of more than 4.0, an average wait time of 20 minutes or fewer, and an average ride time of 30 minutes or fewer. For this project, four performance measures were considered, with the corresponding goal/target for measuring the outcome (see Table-1). SWT anticipated that it will be at this point of the project SW Prime MD will be at a stage of ridership growth that additional resources will be added. The long-term vision of the SW Prime MD project and its performance measures was to maintain a successful and sustainable service that compares to the success of SW Prime in terms of the metrics described above. SWT used the monthly tracking form (see appendix 3) to track the key metrics and the performance of this project.

Table 1- Table for tracking the key metrics and performance of SW Prime MD service

S.N.	Performance Measure	Outcome Goal (Target)	Actual During Reporting Period/month	Actual to Date	Percent of Target to Date
1	Riders dropped off ahead of their scheduled medical appointment (no later than 5 minutes)	≥ 80%			
2	Passengers per in service hour	≥ 3.0			
3	Fulfill trips requested	≥ 80%			
4	Average customer satisfaction score	≥ 4.0			

Outcomes

The performance measures analysis of SW Prime MD service for the grant period shows that the pilot program met the standard performance measures. SWT out-performed measure-1 by completing 99.95% of the trips ahead of or no later than 5 minutes of their scheduled medical appointment. The average passenger load per service hour for the project duration was 2.0, which is less than the target of 3.0 passengers per service hour. When compared to regular SW Prime service with an average passenger load of 4.6 boardings per service hour, SW Prime MD ridership was only half the total ridership. This might be because of broader transportation reasons behind regular SW Prime rides as compared to only non-emergency trips served by SW Prime MD.

The target of the project was to fulfill at least 80 percent of the requested trips, but SWT fulfilled entire 100 percent of the requested trips for non-emergency medical transportation. The average customer rating for the service was 5.0, which meets the target of 4.0 or above rating. SWT was able to meet its goal via leveraging the existing resources including vehicles, Spare Lauch (mobility operating platform), drivers, and support staff to operate SW Prime MD service just as efficiently as SW Prime.

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7	ab	le 2-	Tab	le sh	owing	g Perfoi	rmanc	e Meas	ures of	SW Prii	me MI	D servi	ce fo	r ICA	M Gr	ant Pe	eriod	(Dec	2023-	June 2	024)	

S.N.	Performance Measure	Outcome Goal (Target)	Actual During Reporting Period/month	Actual to Date	Percent of Target to Date
1	Riders dropped off ahead of their scheduled medical appointment (no later than 5 minutes)		99.95%	99.91%	124.9%
2	Passengers per in service hour	≥ 3.0	1.64	2.0	66.67%
3	Fulfill trips requested	≥ 80%	100%	100%	125%
4	Average customer satisfaction score	≥ 4.0	5.0	5.0	125%

Table 3- Table showing Outcome Measures of SW Prime MD service for ICAM Grant Period (Dec 2023-June 2024)

Outcome of SW Prime MD

By the conclusion of the grant, we improved overall accessibility and satisfaction in medical transportation services, as evidenced by:

- 1) Fulfilling 99.95 percent of scheduled medical appointments promptly with passengers dropped off no later than 5 minutes of their scheduled time.
- 2) Serving 2.0 passengers per hour, which is only 66.67 % of the target/goal.
- 3) Fulfilling 100 percent of requested trips
- 4) Achieving an average customer satisfaction score of 5.0 out of 5.0

Lessons Learned

Through the implementation of the SW Prime MD project, SouthWest Transit has learned valuable lessons that will guide future initiatives. Leveraging existing resources proved effective in launching the service efficiently and cost-effectively, emphasizing the importance of scalability as demand grows. The focus of SW Prime MD for medical trips has increased and enhanced accessibility to heath care especially to transportation disadvantaged population in the region. Establishing partnerships with Ridgeview Medical Center was crucial for enhancing accessibility and affordability through subsidies. The additional partnerships would have added more value for the patients. Hence, we learned that we need to identify more partnership opportunities with others and if possible, all medical facilities in the region. We also learned that effective community engagement and educational efforts, especially travel training, were pivotal in promoting service adoption among target demographics.

Similarly, we learned that the new Ford Transits have a good mix of capacity, ADA accessibility and fuel mileage. These vehicles work well with our Prime MD service. These were the first Federally procured vehicles SWT was involved in procuring. We learned that the federal process is more time intensive than state procurement. During the procurement process, we ran into issues with procuring vehicles due to EV vehicles not providing the range we needed and very few options for vehicles that fell under the Buy America rule. We also ran into supply line issues and vehicle chassis shortages.

Impacts of COVID-19

The commencement of service in December 2023 ensured minimal disruption from the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the impact of the pandemic was notable during the grant acquisition process and project initiation timelines. The pandemic resulted in delays in vehicle procurement due to backorders attributed to COVID-19-related supply chain issues. These challenges extended the overall timeline for vehicle acquisition beyond initial projections. It took about four months to write an RFP and award a contract, while it took about 20 months from contract to delivery of the first vehicle and an additional 6 months for the delivery of the last vehicle due to supply line issues and vehicle chassis shortages.

Moving Forward

As we close out the ICAM grant, SWT look forward to continuing the SW Prime MD service, as we are operating SW Prime service anyway. We have all necessary resources to continue this operation, and we see the value our service has added in the community and healthcare accessibility. Moving forward, SWT seeks funding resources and additional partnership opportunities with medical facilities to increase our service destinations, affordability, and for financial sustainability. SWT will be using the vehicles procured through this grant to operate the SW Prime MD in addition to the existing resources. We do not plan to replace these vehicles until their useful life.

Conclusion

The SW Prime MD pilot program has proven to be a vital addition to SWT's service offerings, effectively meeting the transportation needs of vulnerable populations for non-emergency medical trips. By leveraging existing resources and partnerships, SWT demonstrated the feasibility and impact of microtransit solutions tailored to healthcare accessibility. Moving forward, SWT is committed to sustaining the SW Prime MD service beyond the grant period, seeking additional funding and partnerships to expand service coverage and ensure financial viability.

The lessons learned from this initiative, including the importance of scalable solutions and strategic partnerships, will guide SWT's future endeavors in enhancing public transit accessibility and inclusivity. SWT remains dedicated to serving the evolving needs of its community, prioritizing innovation and customer-centric service delivery in public transportation.

Appendices

Sample Support Letter



6401 France Avenue South Edina, MN 55435-2199 Tel 952-924-5000

November 6, 2018

Len Simich Chief Executive Officer SouthWest Transit 13500 Technology Drive Eden Prairie, MN 55344

Dear Mr. Simich,

The purpose of this letter is to express Fairview Southdale Hospital's strong support for SouthWest Transit's (SWT) Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility (ICAM) and Human Service Coordination Research (HSCR) Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant applications.

The innovative demonstration service being proposed as part of SWT's grant applications—SW Prime MD—is a much-needed service that will greatly benefit Fairview Southdale Hospital and its patients. The need for such a service will only increase as our patient population continues to age.

Should SWT be awarded funding for its proposed SW Prime MD service, Fairview Southdale Hospital will be a strong partner with SWT in helping to provide this innovative and necessary service to its patients. Best of luck on your applications.

Sincerely,

Jeoff T. Will, MBA

COO, Acute Care Hospitals

Fairview Ridges, Southdale & Bethesda



500 S. Maple Street • Waconia, MN 55387-1791 (952) 442-2191 • (800) 967-4620 www.ridgeviewmedical.org

November 6, 2018

Len Simich Chief Executive Officer SouthWest Transit 13500 Technology Drive Eden Prairie, MN 55344

Dear Mr. Simich,

The purpose of this letter is to express Ridgeview's strong support for SouthWest Transit's (SWT) Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility (ICAM) and Human Service Coordination Research (HSCR) Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant applications.

The innovative demonstration service being proposed as part of SWT's grant applications—SW Prime MD—is a much-needed service that will greatly benefit patients that access various Ridgeview locations. The need for such a service will only increase as our patient population continues to age.

Should SWT be awarded funding for its proposed SW Prime MD service, Ridgeview will be a strong partner with SWT in helping to provide this innovative and necessary service to patients in our community. Best of luck on your applications.

Sincerely,

Michael Phelps

President and CEO

Ridgeview Medical Center and Clinics



November 12, 2018

Len Simich Chief Executive Officer SouthWest Transit 13500 Technology Drive Eden Prairie, MN 55344

Dear Mr. Simich,

The purpose of this letter is to express St. Francis Regional Medical Center's strong support for SouthWest Transit's (SWT) Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility (ICAM) and Human Service Coordination Research (HSCR) Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant applications.

The innovative demonstration service being proposed as part of SWT's grant applications—SW Prime MD—is a much-needed service that will greatly benefit St. Francis and its patients. The need for such a service will only increase as our patient population continues to age.

Should SWT be awarded funding for its proposed SW Prime MD service, St. Francis will be a strong partner with SWT in helping to provide this innovative and necessary service to its patients. Best of luck on your applications.

Sincerely,

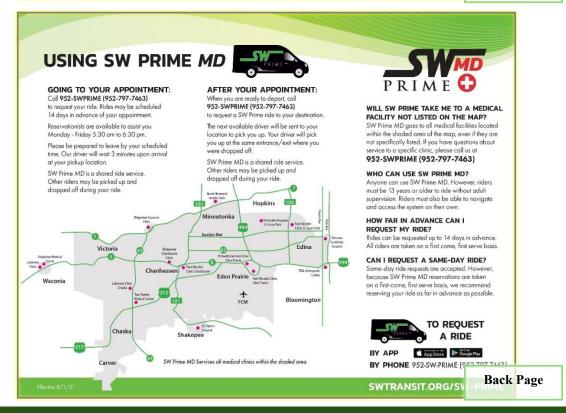
Michael Morris

Director of Business Development

1455 St Francis Ave | Shakopee, MN 55379 | t 952.428.3000 | f 952.428.3820 | stfrancis-shakopee.com

SW Prime MD Service Brochure





Monthly Tracking Report



ICAM 2021 Performance Measures Monthly Tracking form

Grantee Name:	SouthWest Transit	_ Month:	June 2024	
-				

Major Activities Output Measures (this can include appropriate procurements, cooperative agreements, policies and procedures, personnel recruitment, calls received, rides provided)

	Performance Measure	Outcome	Actual During	Actual to	Percent of
		Goal	Reporting	Date	Target to
		(Target)	Period		Date
1	Riders dropped off ahead of their	≥ 80%	99.95%	99.91%	124.9%
	scheduled medical appointment				
	(no later than 5 minutes)				
2	Passengers per in service hour	≥ 3.0	1.64	2.0	66.67%
3	Fulfill trips requested	≥ 80%	100%	100%	125%
4	Average customer satisfaction	≥ 4.0	5.0	5.0	125%
	score				
5	Outreach and marketing efforts		_		_

Outcome Measure(s): identify the outcome goal for your project. (state as a percentage)

Outcome Measures

By the conclusion of the grant, we improved overall accessibility and satisfaction in medical transportation services, as evidenced by:

- 1) Fulfilling 99.95 percent of scheduled medical appointments promptly with passengers dropped off no later than 5 minutes of their scheduled time.
- 2) Serving 2.0 passengers per hour, which is only 66.67 % of the target/goal.
- 3) Fulfilling 100 percent of requested trips
- 4) Achieving an average customer satisfaction score of 5.0 out of 5.0

SW Prime MD Ridership Data

Table 4- SW Prime Ridership Data for Grant Period (Dec 2023-June 2024)

S.N.	Description and Numbers	Values/Quantity
1	Total Number of Requested Trips	3218
2	Total Number of Completed Trips	2839
3	Total Number of Cancelled Trips	379
	Cancellation Percentage	11.78%
4	Average Requests per Rider	5.18
5	Number of Active Riders	548
6	Average Travel Duration	21.23 minutes
7	Average Travel Distance	9.95 miles
8	Median Wait Time	35.78