



Price Road Flexible Transit Study Chandler Transportation Commission Presentation NOVEMBER 17, 2021

VALLEY METRO STAFF PRESENTED A STUDY UPDATE AT A REGULAR MEETING OF THE CHANDLER TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Updates

City of Chandler Senior Transportation Planner Jason Crampton announced that Chandler has been awarded a \$2 million grant to be used for implementation and operations of the program for approximately two years. The grant came through A for Arizona, a non-profit organization that works with school districts to improve transportation options for students.

As the program is implemented, the city will work with local schools, in particular high schools, to market the program.

The Presentation

The Price Road Flexible Transit study (PRFTS) manager, Aaron Xaevier, presented recommendations and findings of the PRFTS to the Commissioners and other meeting attendees during a virtual Webex meeting, which was recorded by city of Chandler (COC) representatives and available to the public to access. The meeting included an overview of the study, potential alternatives, public outreach efforts and feedback and recommendations for discussion. The meeting and accompanying PowerPoint presentation can be viewed by using the link and password below:

Link:

<https://chandleraz.webex.com/recording/service/sites/chandleraz/recording/playback/68e7a3362a25103abe370050568f2e04>

Password: yX2hXCnJ (case sensitive)

Questions, Comments and Responses

Below are the Chandler Transportation Commission's (CTC) questions and comments regarding the Price Road Flexible Transit Study and the associated responses.

Question (Q): Commissioner Dean Brennan, CTC - Why is there a significant difference between inflow and outflow? Shouldn't they be fairly balanced?

Answer (A): Aaron Xaevier, Valley Metro (VM) - The inflow shows essentially all the people that are coming in and the outflow is the amount of people going out who are the people who actually live here and are leaving every day. The number in the middle is the number of people who live and work in the area.

Q: Commissioner Dean Brennan, CTC - Was this an online survey? You only received 18 responses.

A: Aaron Xaevier, VM - Yes, this was available online. It was pretty low. We had 40 responses to the previous question, so I think over time people answer what questions they want and skip past the others.

Q: Commissioner John Repar, CTC - Where did you get the employer data from?

A: Aaron Xaevier, VM - It came from the LEHD, a combination of census data. This is based on data they collected for employment with the census. It is mostly census based.

Q: Commissioner Dean Brennan, CTC - There are trips that originate outside the zone, correct? And if they are coming into the zone, chances are they are driving a vehicle, maybe a few take public transit. I would guess most people coming into the zone are driving a personal vehicle. Those individuals would not take advantage of the system. In regards to the outflow, those are people who live in the zone and they're leaving the zone in the morning for school or whatever. But the system only goes to the boundary of the zone, is that correct? They would have to change to another form of transportation. For someone who is going to go door-to-door, that would be an individual who lives in the zone and goes to a school that is in the zone. Those are the only people who would use the system as it's described. Is there any way to determine the number of trips?

A: Aaron Xaevier, VM - You are correct in saying that to get door-to-door service you would have to have a destination within the zone and also be in the zone. We hope that some people will capitalize on the increased access in the zone and the quickness of the wait times, that the transfers won't be too bad, and if we can coordinate them well in the system, it may draw more people into the microtransit zone and the regional transit zone as well. It has been shown that systems like this act as feeders to the regional transit network

A: Jason Crampton, COC - We do have one bus route in the service area that has very minimal service. People do use it to get to the employers. So, we have a transit audience already accessing this area and most of those live outside the service area as well. As part of this service, when we bring it on, we are likely to eliminate the bus

service south of Pecos Road and replace it with this. Now instead of having one bus line in the area, this microtransit service would connect with six different routes. It would get people to any number of routes that would get people to Tempe, Mesa, and Gilbert. It's providing a lot more flexibility with the transit service and we think we can take that to increase the number of trips provided.

Q: Commissioner Dean Brennan, CTC - Does it connect with any of the express bus service?

A: Jason Crampton, COC - Yes, it will also connect with the Chandler Park-and-Ride.

Q: Commissioner Ron Hardin, CTC - Has the fare not quite been worked out yet?

A: Aaron Xaevier, VM - Yes Commissioner. I think we are still deciding. I know nationally a lot of services keep their fares about the same as local bus fares, so here that would be around two dollars. It's often also piloted as a free service to get people in the door and to get the habit built. I think it is pretty flexible in terms of tweaking the fares. We have to abide by Title VI rules. Doing it in the app is pretty instantaneous.

A: Jason Crampton, COC - One thing we do know is that the service will be free to students, at least during the grant period. That we do know. Whether we pilot it to be free the first year or one dollar per ride, I think that's kind of what we are thinking of. After that initial period, it could be integrated with the regional bus system where you pay two dollars and that counts as your fare for this, plus the bus ride.

Q: Commissioner Ron Hardin, CTC - Was there a cost offset or is that still outstanding as well? Or was that baked into what was presented?

A: Aaron Xaevier, VM - All the costs we gave were gross, so it doesn't assume any assumption of fare collection or the offsets that we would get by replacing services that are already in the area.

A: Jason Crampton, COC - That service south of Pecos costs the City about \$200,000 a year. So, that would be the offset of whatever new service that we bring on.

Q: Commissioner Dean Brennan, CTC - If this system is successful, is there a potential for expanding this to other areas in Chandler?

A: Jason Crampton, COC - The Transportation Master Plan does recommend additional service areas throughout the city. We could interpret that in a number of ways. We could launch a separate service area in southeast Chandler or West Chandler, or what some other regions do is have a larger microtransit area. If this is successful, we could expand the service boundaries or launch different services where people would have to transfer. We would probably need to look at our existing bus services and see if there are opportunities to realize any cost savings from reduction in bus service. Bus service is still important and is the backbone of the transit service. This can help to facilitate access to the important bus routes that need to be preserved.

Q: Commissioner John Repar, CTC - I look at the inflow and outflow and it reads to me that traffic management is a huge issue.

A: Aaron Xaevier, VM - There is a lot of traffic that impacts this area so we wanted to look at this to try and consolidate the users on the system and hopefully reduce the vehicles and traffic as well.

Q: Commissioner Dean Brennan, CTC - The inflow and outflow numbers, do those include traffic on the 202?

A: Aaron Xaevier, VM - Only if they get off the 202 to come in to the study area, not if they are just going through.

Q: Chairperson Dan Henderson, CTC - Based on the study area and the span of service and days of operation, would you see this, if successful, expanding the span of service and days of operation. If there needed to be future expansion, is there capacity for that?

A: Jason Crampton, COC - It has been contemplated. It all comes down to the cost of the service versus the size of the coverage area. If the usage within this service does not maximize the capacity of the vehicles, we could expand the service area without increasing the cost. That is something we will keep on eye on over the first six to 12 months of the service. If our vehicles are not running at full capacity, maybe we extend this east to McQueen or Cooper or Gilbert, or maybe we go north to Ray Road. It's all a balance. If it proves to be wildly successful and there's an interest in applying more funding toward it, then yes, we can expand regardless of whether our vehicles are at full capacity. We would just bring on additional vehicles.

Q: Chairperson Dan Henderson, CTC - Is the fare structure part of the initial program? If it becomes more wildly popular, does it scale as costs were to go up? Would the fare structure have to pivot at some point and if so, what are some elements that would prompt you to reconsider the fare structure?

A: Jason Crampton, COC - Cost is an important consideration. Another large driving factor would be the demand for the service. If we pilot it with a 50 cent, free or one dollar fare and our vehicles are now being overwhelmed by demand, that's a good indicator to me that we need to increase the fare a little bit. On the other hand, if we start with a one or two dollar fare and we can't get enough ridership to fully utilize our vehicles, we can look at expanding the service area or reconsider the fare as well. The fare structure set up with this technology is very easy to change so it's not something that has to be set in stone forever.

A: Aaron Xaevier, VM - When people expand the zones, or even split off zones, you could have a tiered fare structure. If you want to stay within the zone, it's X amount, but if you want to transcend or cross zones, it's going to be a Y amount. You are going a little bit farther, so you will pay a little bit more essentially. We could also incorporate something like fare capping in here as well, where you basically pay for a day pass even though you have been paying by trip. It would almost incentivize transfers in the system.

Q: Chairperson Dan Henderson, CTC - I didn't see the ability to accommodate bicycles. Would these vehicles be able to accommodate bicycles?

A: Aaron Xaevier, VM - Yes. We have seen other microtransit systems where the minivans have bike racks, so I imagine we could do something similar on a passenger van or the cutaway.

Q: Commissioner David Heineking, CTC - I noticed there was no funding called out for marketing of this program. If it's going to be successful, people need to know about it. I want to make sure that is being taken into consideration. In particular to the high school kids.

A: Aaron Xaevier, VM - In the report we do have a line item for marketing. I think we put it at about \$10,000. We also mentioned that Valley Metro would market it through our own social media and marketing channels as well. I believe cooperation with city of Chandler resources is mentioned as well. That was kind of a benchmark figure we put in there.

A: Jason Crampton, COC - I think we need to make a more concerted effort with marketing. Even more so than what we've thought about originally.

Q: Commissioner David Heineking, CTC - It needs to be as easy as possible to transfer from this on to the bus. If you pay for this, it counts as your fare for the bus or you can at least pay for both of them at the same time. Maybe if you pay for a bus fare, this program is discounted. Some way to get people to start thinking about getting on this and if you take the bus, there is some advantage to using both of those. Just to get butts into the seats, as you said.

A: Aaron Xaevier, VM - We just put out phase one of our app a month ago and we are looking at next year, right around when this service would be rolling out, we would have an app fare pay that would be integrated across modes for ease of use.