



KING COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

APRIL 1, 2019

Follow-up on Access Paratransit Audit

As Transit gears up to execute a new paratransit contract in August, it is building the framework to implement several audit recommendations. This framework includes a contract management plan, an Equity Impact Review (EIR), and funding for customer service and outreach. As part of its EIR, Transit reached out to a number of community-based organizations that work with historically underserved groups. In the 2019-20 budget, Transit secured funding to bring its Access customer service function in-house and hire a contractor to conduct annual rider surveys. Among new performance standards that Transit is likely to hear about from riders is a shortened drop-off window. The tighter window could reduce the number of riders who arrive excessively early for appointments they travel to on paratransit.

Despite significant process on many recommendations, Transit did not make progress on recommendations relating to additional payment methods and more accessible surveys. Transit delayed plans to expand a mobile ticketing pilot to all Access customers citing resource constraints. It continued to ask survey respondents their primary language, but did not show improvement in the proportion of respondents who did not primarily speak English at home, indicating that it had not taken steps to increase participation of historically underserved populations its surveys.

We made 17 recommendations in our 2017 audit, "Access Paratransit: Action Needed to Address Cost, Quality, and Equity." This report provides status updates on eight recommendations and a breakdown of all 17 recommendations by status (see table below). Because implementation of some recommendations rely on new contract implementation, follow-up on recommendations has been phased into three separate periods. We plan to follow up on all pending recommendations in 2020.

 1 DONE	 7 PROGRESS	 2 OPEN	7 PENDING
Fully implemented Auditor will no longer monitor.	Partially implemented Auditor will continue to monitor.	Remain unresolved Auditor will continue to monitor.	Not yet reviewed Auditor will follow up at future date.

Please see below for status updates on the eight recommendations reviewed in this report.



Recommendation 1

PENDING

Recommendation 2

PENDING

Recommendation 3

PROGRESS



Transit should complete and execute a contract management plan for monitoring the new contracts. For each contract requirement, the plan should specify: a) the method for verifying compliance; b) frequency of review; and c) staff member responsible.

STATUS UPDATE: Access aims to complete its contract management plan by June 1, 2019, and execute the plan along with its new contract on August 1, 2019. The 2019–2020 budget includes two FTEs to support contract management and performance improvements. As an interim step, Access developed a contract management checklist for its current contract.

WHAT REMAINS: Access needs to complete and execute a contract management plan based on requirements in its new contract, which it plans to finalize by April 1, 2019.

Recommendation 4

PENDING

Recommendation 5

On May 25, 2018

PROGRESS



Recommendation 6

PROGRESS



Transit should put in place monitoring and enforcement procedures to make sure paratransit riders are not dropped off more than 30 minutes before their appointments.

STATUS UPDATE: Effective October 1, 2018, Access shortened its drop-off window from 60 minutes to 30 minutes prior to riders' scheduled appointments, to reduce the number of riders arriving at their destination excessively early. Access has assigned staff to monitor and analyze performance against this new target.

WHAT REMAINS: Access needs to establish enforcement procedures to ensure adherence to this policy. Transit said these may be included in the new contract.

Recommendation 7

OPEN



Transit should provide additional fare payment methods that take into account riders' needs and trip frequency.

STATUS UPDATE: Access plans to include a requirement that service providers offer e-purse functionality in its new contract. The required e-purse system would not be compatible with the current ORCA system, but would be interoperable with Next Generation ORCA. Access estimates that the riders will be able to use the e-purse system sometime in 2020. Expansion of Transit's mobile ticketing pilot to all Access customers was delayed due to resource constraints.

WHAT REMAINS: Transit needs to offer additional fare payment methods that take into account riders' needs and trip frequency.

Recommendation 8

PROGRESS



Transit should work directly with King County communities to develop activities that will address barriers to the Access paratransit program for people with limited English proficiency.

STATUS UPDATE: Access staff participated in community outreach events and printed public materials with information about requesting interpreters.

WHAT REMAINS: Transit needs to rely on community input to develop and implement activities that address barriers faced by limited-English-speaking communities.

Recommendation 9

On May 25, 2018

DONE



Recommendation 10

PROGRESS



Transit should immediately take steps to implement an Equity Impact Review of the Access paratransit program.

STATUS UPDATE: Access collected data for its Equity Impact Review through community engagement events and surveys of community-based organizations, including Asian Counseling and Referral Services, Refugee Women's Alliance, El-Centro De La Raza, International Community Health Services, Open Doors for Multicultural Families, and King County Public Health Access Program.

WHAT REMAINS: Transit needs to analyze its findings and develop recommendations and implementation plans.

Recommendation 11

PENDING

Recommendation 12

PENDING

Recommendation 13

PROGRESS



Transit should follow through with its commitment to establish a customer service function that is independent of control center, service provider, or turnkey contractors.

STATUS UPDATE: Transit plans to move Access Customer Service into Metro Customer Service in the third quarter of 2019. Work is underway to integrate the two sections' technology and business systems. The 2019–2020 budget allocates three FTEs to create the in-house customer service function.

WHAT REMAINS: Transit needs to create, staff, and direct customers to the in-house customer service function in Metro Customer Service.

Recommendation 14

PROGRESS



Transit should gather feedback from active Access riders and prospective users on an annual basis and use this information to improve service quality.

STATUS UPDATE: Transit received funding approval to conduct an annual Access rider survey, similar to Metro's rider-non-rider survey for fixed-route service, in 2019. Access staff are working to release a request for proposals in February 2019 to select a survey contractor. Once selection is complete, Access aims to begin work immediately on survey development and distribution.

WHAT REMAINS: To complete this recommendation, Transit needs to develop, distribute, and analyze the survey on an annual basis.

Recommendation 15

OPEN



Transit should use information from its 2016 Access paratransit survey to identify methods to increase the participation of historically underserved populations in future surveys, and implement them.

STATUS UPDATE: Transit completed a pilot project to survey Access riders about their service experience the day after their trip. The proportion of respondents who do not primarily speak English at home was largely unchanged from the 2016 survey.

WHAT REMAINS: Transit needs to identify and implement ways to increase participation of historically underserved populations in future surveys.

Recommendation 16

PENDING

Recommendation 17

PENDING

Megan Ko, Management Auditor, conducted this review. If you have any questions, or would like more information, please contact the King County Auditor's Office at KCAO@KingCounty.gov or 206-477-1033.