

Request for Information

Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA) provides fixed route, paratransit, and vanpool service throughout Whatcom County. WTA is a municipal corporation formed in 1983. The transit revenue fleet consists of 61 fixed route buses, 43 paratransit vehicles, and 35 vanpools.

WTA's mission is to enhance our community by:

- Delivering safe, reliable, efficient and friendly service
- Offering environmentally sound transportation choices
- Providing leadership in creating innovative transportation solutions
- Partnering with our community to improve transportation systems

Additional information about WTA can be found at www.ridewta.com.

Purpose

The purpose of this request is to gather information regarding available services for the agency. This is a "Request for Information" only.

WTA is researching potential changes to its Zone and Paratransit services and is interested in all ideas from the vendor community. Some ideas include providing vouchers to customers and they can use cab or ride share to schedule their rides, move the program in house, or establish a new long-term contract with a new vendor or combination of vendors.

1. Are there vendors that could provide some or all of the service available?
 - a. If so, who are they
 - b. If not, why is there no interest
2. Is there a service or idea that WTA is not thinking of?
 - a. What is it
 - b. Who provides it
 - c. What would an estimated cost be (understanding that the estimate would be budgetary and non-binding)

WTA has previously contracted to 3rd parties for this service. The current vendor is closing their business at the end of September and ending the contract.

Background

The current service augments WTA's Zone and Paratransit service and uses an advance reservation model with the current contractor providing curb-to-curb and door-

to-door services. A portion of this service is for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)¹ eligible riders, while the majority is for the general public using the Zone service. The reservation model being utilized today works well, however WTA is interested in offering same day on-demand service if possible.

WTA offers what it calls “Zone Service”, which provides limited service to the general public in rural areas of Whatcom County on certain days of the week depending on the area (See page 4). For example, on Tuesday and Friday, Zone Service is provided in North East Whatcom County: Everson, Lynden, and Sumas. Riders on Zone Service are picked up at a rider designated time and location and dropped off at the nearest transit station (Downtown Station, Cordata Station, Ferndale Station, or Lynden Station). Occasionally, timing coupled with location on some of these rides make performance by WTA inefficient so using a contractor for these outliers is ideal.

Historically, these trips have amounted to 4% of all of WTA Zone and Paratransit service. In 2019, the contractor provided 1,600 Paratransit rides and 679 Zone Service rides.

Under the current model, rides must be scheduled no later than 5:00 pm the day before by the rider and WTA will communicate rides assigned to the contractor up to but not later than 7:00 pm. WTA assigns rides based on location and rider needs. On occasion, riders have a mobility device, such as a wheelchair. When the contractor does not have a wheelchair accessible vehicle, WTA is required to perform the ride.

The service area encompasses virtually all populated parts of Whatcom County, except Newhalem/Diablo and the Mt. Baker Ski Area.

Two of the more challenging service areas, which the current vendor serves exclusively, include Lummi Island and Point Roberts. Access to Lummi Island is by ferry only which has space for 20 passenger vehicles and makes runs between Lummi Island and the mainland every 20 minutes. Point Roberts access is through the USA/Canada border only which provides unique requirements and challenges. WTA would like to continue using contracted service exclusively for these service areas.

Since WTA has only one vendor and assigns the ride, the contracted drivers are drug tested in WTA’s drug test pool. The vendor is also required to have FTA approved drug testing policies and procedures. Service changes, such as contracting with multiple vendors and allowing riders to pick from those vendors, would eliminate the need for drivers to be tested in WTA’s pool.

¹ 42 USC § 12101 *et seq*

Contact

Submit responses and questions to:

Magan Waltari, Procurement & Grants Coordinator
4011 Bakerview Spur
Bellingham, WA 98226
procurement@ridewta.com
fax: 360-788-9532
phone: 360-788-9332

Response Requirements and Format

The respondent is responsible for all costs related to the preparation of the submitted information packet or any other fees and charges relating to the preparation and submission of a response.

WTA is interested in all potential recommendations for filling these service needs and encourages all potential responses.

WTA, at its option, may use information obtained from this process in preparation of a future Request for Proposal (RFP), which would be used to secure specific services under contract.

Nothing in this Request for Information (RFI) obligates WTA to contract with any respondent. Nor does it obligate a respondent to perform.

Timelines

RFI responses must be received no later than 4:00 PM, Tuesday, May 5, 2020.

Zone Service Map

Paratransit Flex and
Zone Service Map.pdf
