

STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: Complaint about Regional Paratransit Service  
FROM: Christy Wegener, Director of Planning and Operations  
DATE: May 22, 2017

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**Action Requested**

None – Information only

**Background**

At the April 24<sup>th</sup> Projects and Services Committee meeting, Vice Chair Karla Brown requested that staff bring back a report on a complaint received about paratransit service to a location in Castro Valley.

**Discussion**

On April 9<sup>th</sup>, LAVTA received a complaint (Attachment 1) from a Livermore resident about contracted transportation service to STRIDES in Castro Valley. The complaint was not about LAVTA-contracted service, but was a request to look at our paratransit service area in order to potentially expand to Castro Valley. The complaint was related to contracted service provided by the Regional Center of the East Bay.

As the public transportation provider, LAVTA is responsible for providing complementary paratransit service within ¾ mile of its fixed route network to persons who are ADA eligible. The LAVTA service area for paratransit is very generous and extends well beyond the fixed route network (Attachment 2). However, there are no fixed routes extending to the west of the City of Dublin.

As the Committee will recall, in mid-2015, staff presented a report highlighting the dramatic increase in paratransit trips experienced in FY2015. The staff report outlining the increase in trips is included as Attachment 3. The analysis done as a part of this staff report pointed to adult day programs as a major causal factor to the increase in LAVTA Dial-A-Ride Trips. Many of these day programs have transportation provided by (via contract) or subsidized by the Regional Center of the East Bay (RCEB).

From the Regional Center website: *Regional Centers are nonprofit private corporations that contract with the Department of Developmental Services to provide or coordinate services and supports for individuals with developmental disabilities. They have offices throughout*

*California to provide a local resource to help find and access the many services available to individuals and their families.*

Staff met with RCEB in March 2016 to discuss concerns about the dramatic increase in trips and to understand more about their services. During the meeting, LAVTA staff learned that the RCEB has funding sources that had not seen increases in years, but that they were expecting a funding increase in FY2017. LAVTA also learned that the RCEB funding follows the individual, and that individuals have a choice about what programs and services to use, based on their individual need. For example, a person may choose to attend a day program that promotes independence. This program may not come with contracted transportation services and RCEB will subsidize fares for public transit and/or Dial-A-Ride. In this instance, no additional funds for transportation are received by LAVTA from RCEB. Conversely, there are programs for higher-needs individuals where contracted transportation service is provided by the RCEB. Based on feedback from industry peers, the perception is that due to stagnant funding, the rates RCEB can pay for contracted transportation services have remained low and uncompetitive to high quality transportation firms.

Staff forwarded the complaint to several RCEB staff members immediately after it was received, but LAVTA staff has not yet received an official response. Very recently, LAVTA and MTM have seen another increase in paratransit trips to adult day programs within the Tri-Valley due to unreliable or non-existent transportation service. For example, the ARC Center relocated from a facility on Rutan Drive in Livermore to a new location on Sierra Court in Dublin in early 2017. After the move, consumers who used to utilize the RCEB transportation to the old facility began to call in requesting Wheels Dial-A-Ride transportation to the new location, as RCEB contracted service was no longer provided, or was unreliable. This came at a great surprise to LAVTA. RCEB staff have been invited to attend the May 22<sup>nd</sup> Projects and Services Committee meeting.

Extending the LAVTA paratransit service area to cover the STRIDES Day Program in Castro Valley could come at a significant cost (at least 10 people per day taking a round trip, 5 days/week) of about \$12,000 per month or \$144,000 per year at the current contracted rate of ~\$30 per trip (net of the \$3.50 passenger fare). Additionally, opening up the service area to Castro Valley could induce more ridership and require more vehicles be added to the service so that there are no trip denials. Without any other changes to the paratransit service, it would most likely mean increased subsidy from the fixed route system to cover increased paratransit costs.

LAVTA paratransit trips are still very high and staff has been actively engaged in a series of demand management activities for over a year (Attachment 4). Most importantly, LAVTA has recently launched the comprehensive paratransit study in partnership with the City of Pleasanton. The study will include rider and stakeholder feedback, an analysis of existing conditions, modeling of potential future ridership, identification of gaps/areas for improvement, and the development alternative strategies to manage current and future demand. While the study does not specifically have a regional scope, it is a necessary first step to identifying a solution and making other regional partners aware of the issues. Staff intends to contact RCEB to participate in the study as a stakeholder.

**Next Steps**

LAVTA will engage with Regional Center staff as a part of the Tri-Valley Comprehensive Paratransit Assessment.

**Recommendation**

None –Information Only

**Attachment:**

1. Email Complaint from 4/9/17
2. LAVTA Paratransit Service Area Map
3. Staff Report June 2015
4. Staff Report January 2016