

## Project Summary

### Capital Metro 'Pickup' Demonstration

*Updated June 26, 2018*

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## **I. Project Overview**

### **Considering Transit-On-Demand**

In recent years, Capital Metro has experimented with a number of innovative transportation concepts and technologies in order to bring more riders into its system, encourage multimodal journeys and improve the customer experience. These initiatives fit alongside Capital Metro's "Connections 2025" transit plan, which is designed to create a more frequent, more reliable and better connected system. The plan will guide the evolution of Capital Metro's network over the next 5 years while also identifying long-range opportunities for the next decade and beyond.

As a complement to the work the agency is undertaking around car-sharing, bike-sharing, autonomous vehicles and multimodal trip planning, Capital Metro has also sought to integrate the concept of transit-on-demand into our menu of service options. Transit-on-demand - also referred to as microtransit, or on-demand transit - emphasizes the use of smaller vehicles that can operate in a flexible manner, and more closely integrate technology into service provision - taking a page out of the transportation network company (TNC) playbook.

We believe that transit-on-demand can play an important role in helping Capital Metro solve a number of transportation challenges in Austin: closing first-mile/last-mile gaps, remedying parking shortages at transit hubs and providing a more affordable alternative to taxis or TNCs for those seeking an alternative to fixed-route service. To explore how such offerings might actually work in practice, our staff has undertaken a handful of innovative pilot projects throughout the Austin region.

### **A First Attempt: MetroFlex**

One of these projects was Capital Metro's 'MetroFlex' pilot, a service launched in 2016 and deployed in the town of Manor and a defined part of North Central Austin. MetroFlex had a hybrid "deviated fixed-route" service model: It followed a set route along a major north-south corridor, allowing passengers to catch the bus at conventional stops, but it also gave customers the ability to request route deviations by phone, 2 – 24 hours in advance, allowing the bus to deviate from its route up to 0.5 mile at a handful of set 'deviation points' off the main route. The service was operated using a handful of ADA-accessible cutaway buses.

The service was not fully automated, operating instead using a combination of existing software and manual processes. MetroFlex services had relatively low ridership during its time in service, averaging just a few dozen rides per day. Wanting to build upon this concept, Capital Metro formed a partnership with Via Transportation to reengineer its MetroFlex pilot into a more efficient, flexible service.

We have prepared this briefing to enable other transportation providers to learn from the experience.

## Teaming with Via

Based in New York City, Via provides efficient and affordable shared rides. Its technology and advanced algorithms enable multiple passengers headed in the same direction to share their ride, rerouting vehicles in real-time in response to demand.

Via's Shuttle Operating System (OS) is used to operate vehicles in a wide variety of contexts. In New York, Chicago and Washington, D.C., Via provides 1.5 million rides a month by operating its own platform and directly connecting drivers and passengers. In France, the U.K. and elsewhere, Via deploys its technology with a growing number of government and private-sector partners to improve their transportation services and operate more efficiently. I

Via's product offering includes three major components:

- **Customer and driver mobile apps**
  - App for iOS and Android that allows customers, on-demand, to request transportation and track the progress of their vehicle to their pickup location;
  - Conventional, internet-enabled tablets run a mobile app that allows drivers to receive turn-by-turn directions to customer pickup and drop-off locations, updated in real time.
- **Scheduling and Dispatch/Coordinator software**
  - Cloud-based software that dynamically assigns the most appropriate vehicle to pick the customer up based on the number of vehicles and customer trip destination;
  - Dispatch/coordinator software that allows dispatchers to override and re-route a vehicle to pick up a customer and create trips for passengers who call in;
- **Advanced analytics**
  - Via co-owns service data with partners like Capital Metro, and equips them with analytics tools to help them understand and optimize their services.

## Service Comparison, MetroFlex and Pickup

Within two weeks of launch, Pickup surpassed MetroFlex's average daily ride totals. After a month, Capital Metro placed an additional vehicle in service during peak times to meet demand. Dispatchers' workload was reduced even as the service grew since a high percentage of trips were booked through the app and phone bookings could be completed simply.

### *Pickup Performance, at-a-Glance:*

	Average wait time (minutes)	% of trips booked through an app	Rides per vehicle per hour
<b>MetroFlex</b>	Minimum 2 hours	0%	2
<b>Pickup</b>	11 minutes	66%	3.65

In the report that follows, we will outline in close detail Pickup' structure, scope and performance to date.

## **Other Considerations**

Building upon our experience with Pickup, there are a number of uses Capital Metro could explore with the Via technology that may help increase ridership, deliver more customer-centered service and promote fiscal and environmental sustainability:

- Paratransit – Act as a complementary service where appropriate to reduce the cost per ride, improve the customer experience and expand the reach of service;
- Fixed-route Optimization – Use the technology to calibrate the optimal balance between fixed-route and on-demand mobility by converting underperforming fixed routes during off-peak hours into on-demand service areas;
- Dial-a-Ride – Reduce resource-intensive services/programs by shifting to an on-demand, real-time system that transports more people per vehicle hour.

## **Demonstration Conclusion**

A competitive procurement is desired and, depending on the service area, the type of service offered will either be an area shuttle or first/last mile service or a combination of the two. Capital Metro's goal is to bring more customers into the transit system while also replacing poorly performing fixed route service. Additionally there are locations where the use of a 40 foot bus does not make sense or the street layout does not allow access. Additionally there are small municipalities outside of Capital Metro's service area where a more nimble on-demand area shuttle makes sense. Capital Metro will partner with the appropriate counties to provide these area shuttle services for locations outside its service area. Capital Metro would prefer to focus on first/last mile service for locations within its service area. In smaller municipalities an area shuttle and/or first/last mile service are options.

## **II. Agreement with Via Transportation**

### **Collaborating with Via**

Via and Capital Metro executed a mutual nondisclosure agreement (NDA) with a term of 3 years on February 10, 2016. This allowed us to begin to explore the possibilities of a pilot program – including determining the service model, potential deployment zone(s) and quality of service parameters.

Representatives from Via met with Capital Metro staff, learning more about the region and agency, and building a cross-functional team that included the agency's Chief Information Officer's (CIO) office, the MetroAccess Department and the Marketing and Communications Department.

### **Executing an Agreement**

Under the final agreement, executed January 20, 2017, Via provided the following amenities to Capital Metro for a term of up to one year:

- Rider app
- Via driver app
- Via's technology platform
- Back-end service monitoring & analytics tools
- Localization of Via technology for a single geographic zone
- 10 internet-enabled driver tablets
- Launch and operations expertise
- Ongoing technical and operational support
- Marketing & Launch (joint)

On its side, Capital Metro would provide the following:

- Vehicles and operators
- Dispatch staff (from MetroAccess Department)
- Computers with internet access
- General program support
- Marketing & Launch (joint)

The demonstration period is expected to last 12 months from launch (June 2017), but Capital Metro has the option to terminate the agreement early. Capital Metro and Via sought this flexibility to give each party adequate time to make adjustments to the service as needed, measure its impact and viability, optimize the technology, gauge customer interest and gather sufficient data.

### **III. Service Scope**

Capital Metro planned a flexible transit on-demand service that would allow riders to book rides with no fixed routes and no fixed schedules. This type of flexible service would enable the agency to collect information about mobility patterns in the area.

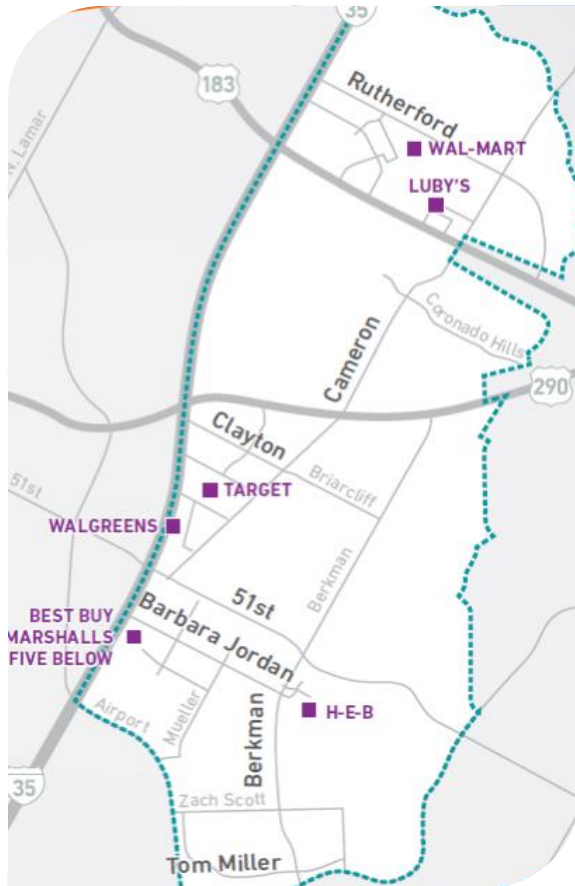
Because of its status as a public agency rather than a private company, Capital Metro needed to create an accessible service, one available to the entire public.

#### **Service Area**

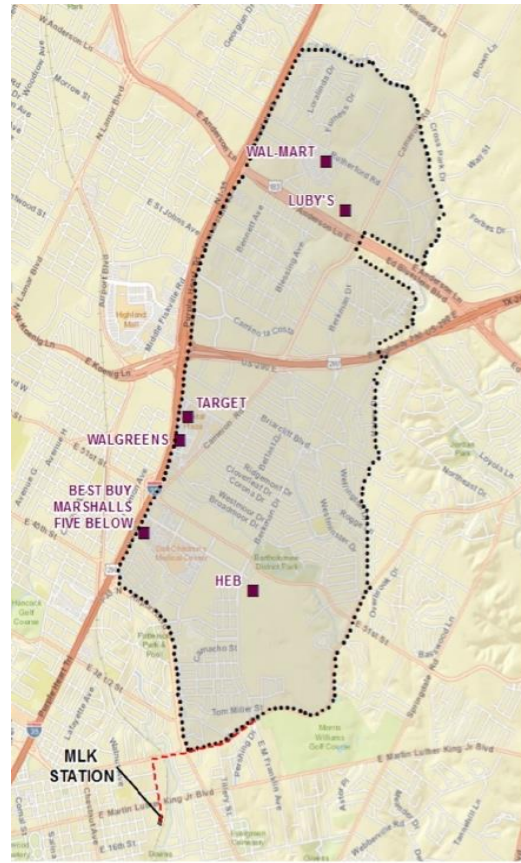
Working with Via, Capital Metro decided to replace the existing MetroFlex pilot with an on-demand transit service. Instead of running as a deviated fixed-route service, this pilot program, to be branded “Pickup”, would serve a rectangular, 5.49-square-mile area that roughly encompassed the area served by the existing MetroFlex service.

As described below, in October 2017, Via and Capital Metro expanded the service zone to a total of 7.37 square miles of coverage, adding a pickup/drop-off location at the MLK rail station located approximately a half mile southwest of the initial zone.

The maps below depict the initial June launch zone, and the October expansion:



Initial



Amended

## User Experience

Capital Metro's dispatchers, vehicles and operators serve Pickup riders who request rides directly from the app, and will be picked up within 15 minutes - wait times are on average just 11 minutes.

Via's technology groups overlapping trips, balancing individual rider convenience with system efficiency. Instructions are delivered in real-time, directly to the driver app, including routing, pickups and communications with dispatch.

In addition to in-app booking, Capital Metro dispatchers can book on-demand rides by phone for riders without access to a smartphone. And to support those without credit cards, Pickup is designed to accept cash fares.

## Vehicles

The Pickup-branded cutaway buses can accommodate two wheelchair riders and up to nine seated occupants.

Pickup uses vehicles were previously used to serve the MetroFlex pilot: primarily two 2011 Chevy G3500 Champions, retired from paratransit service.

Capital Metro has implemented additional MetroAccess vehicles to the service during times of peak demand. These additional vehicles are deployed as needed by MetroAccess dispatchers and are denoted as Pickup service vehicles by a magnetic sign.



## Hours of Operation

Because Pickup inherited the vehicles, operating and funding from the MetroFlex pilot, we began the pilot in June 2017 serving the same hours as the previous service: 9 a.m. - 6 p.m. Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.

As of October 2017, Pickup runs weekdays from 7 a.m. – 7 p.m., and 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Saturdays.

## Performance Metrics

As outlined below, Via has provided a reporting system that tracks key performance statistics:

- Ridership
- Passengers per Hour
- Cost per Passenger, Mile, Hour, etc.
- Response Time (Request to Pickup)
- App Downloads
- Reservation Calls
- Customer feedback

Goals associated with these metrics have been drafted but will not be published until the pilot is complete. This includes costs associated with some of these metrics that are being tracked.



#### **IV. Service Launch & Marketing**

##### **Schedule**

The geographic region was set in March 2017, and the program launched in June.

##### **Driver Training**

Driver training took place in two 4 hour sessions. After training, driver behavior was monitored and training reinforced.

##### **Dispatcher/Coordinator Training**

Dispatcher/Coordinator training took place in two 4 hour sessions. After training, Dispatcher/Coordinator behavior was monitored and training reinforced.

##### **Customer Outreach**

Community Involvement created a Customer Outreach Plan with several goals:

- Increase ridership to 72 daily average (MetroFlex was 45 daily average)
- Reduce the number of riders who request service by phone (currently 50%)
- Expand the audience beyond paratransit riders

Customer outreach to include:

- Contacting targeted communities
- Hosting informational sessions to demonstrate the Pickup app (and other Capital Metro services)
- Determine if targeted communities would like to host a Transit Adventure using Pickup

##### **Marketing**

Prior to launch several marketing items were developed and rolled out:

- Promotional web page;
- Two direct mail pieces were developed in English and Spanish and delivered to homes within the service area;
- Posters were designed and deployed to targeted senior communities and key businesses within the service area;
- Sponsored Facebook posts that used keywords associated with the area;

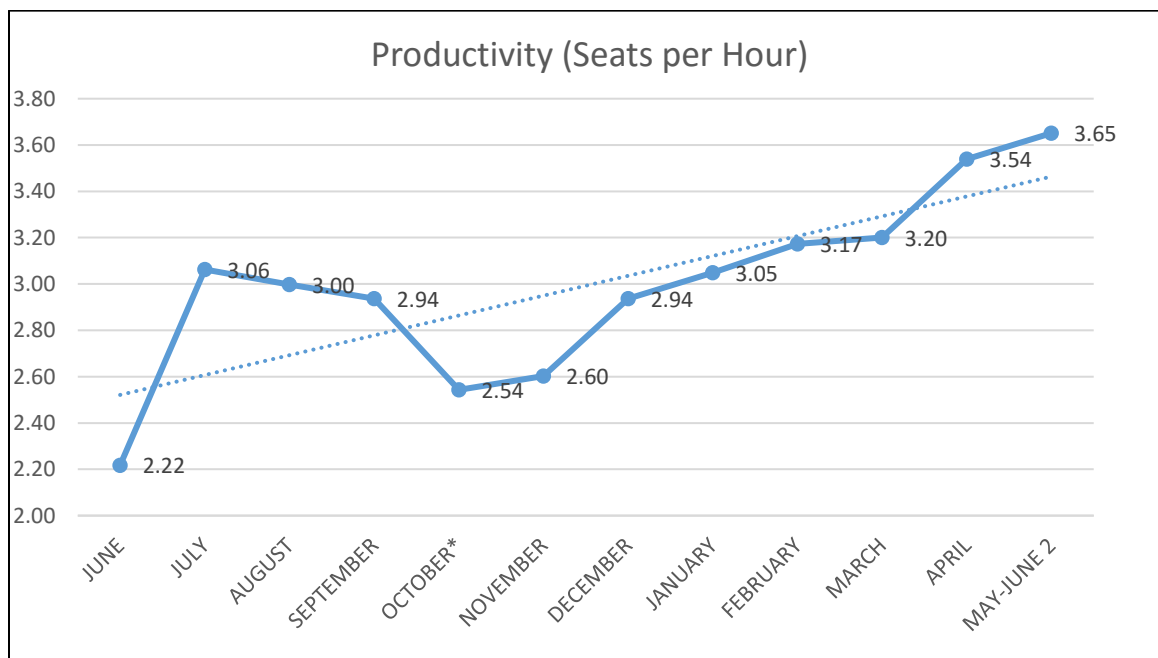
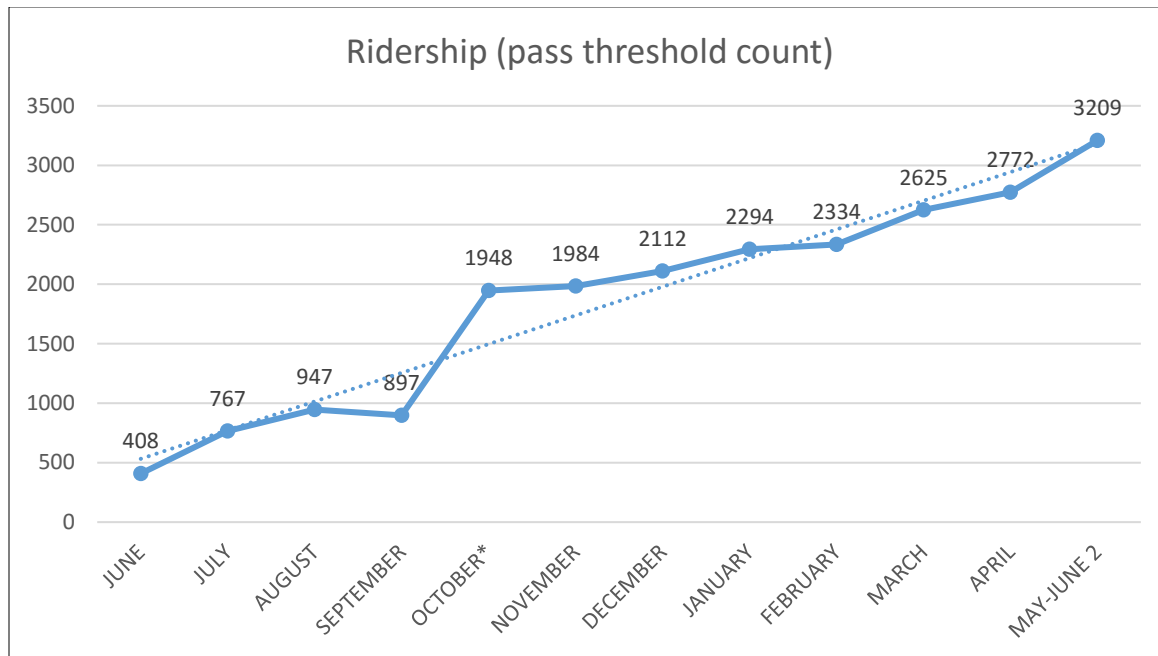
Post-launch, Via was able to work with us to improve searchability results within the app store. Once the service area was expanded, the web page was updated and additional collateral was developed and deployed.

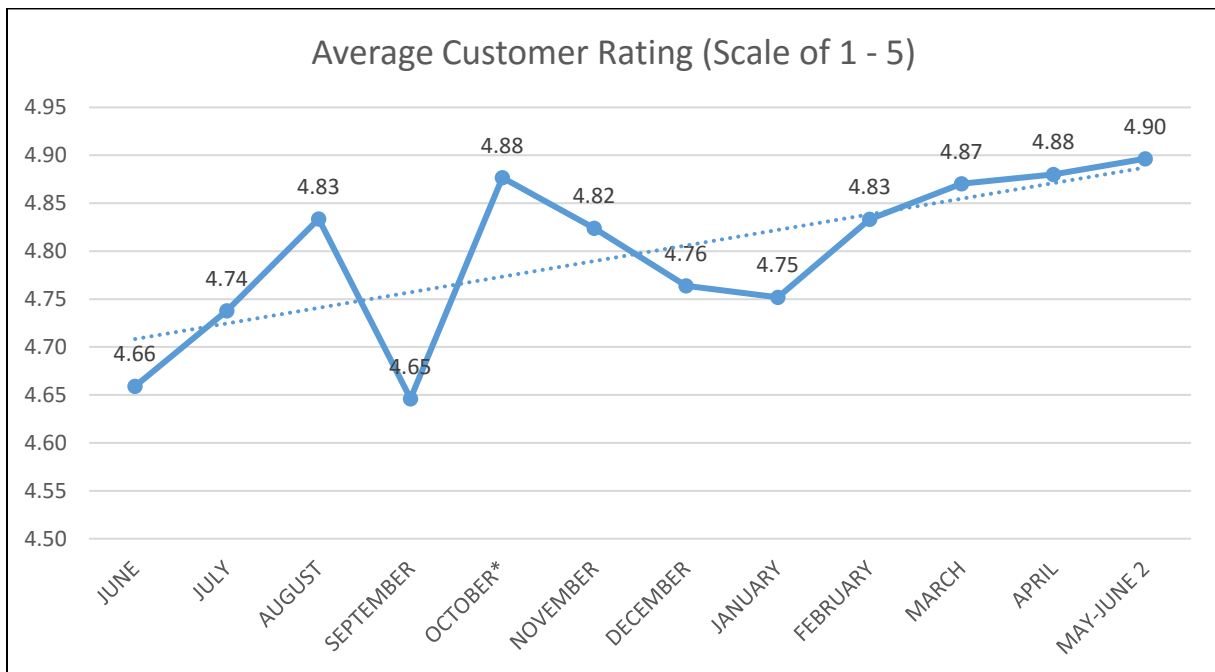
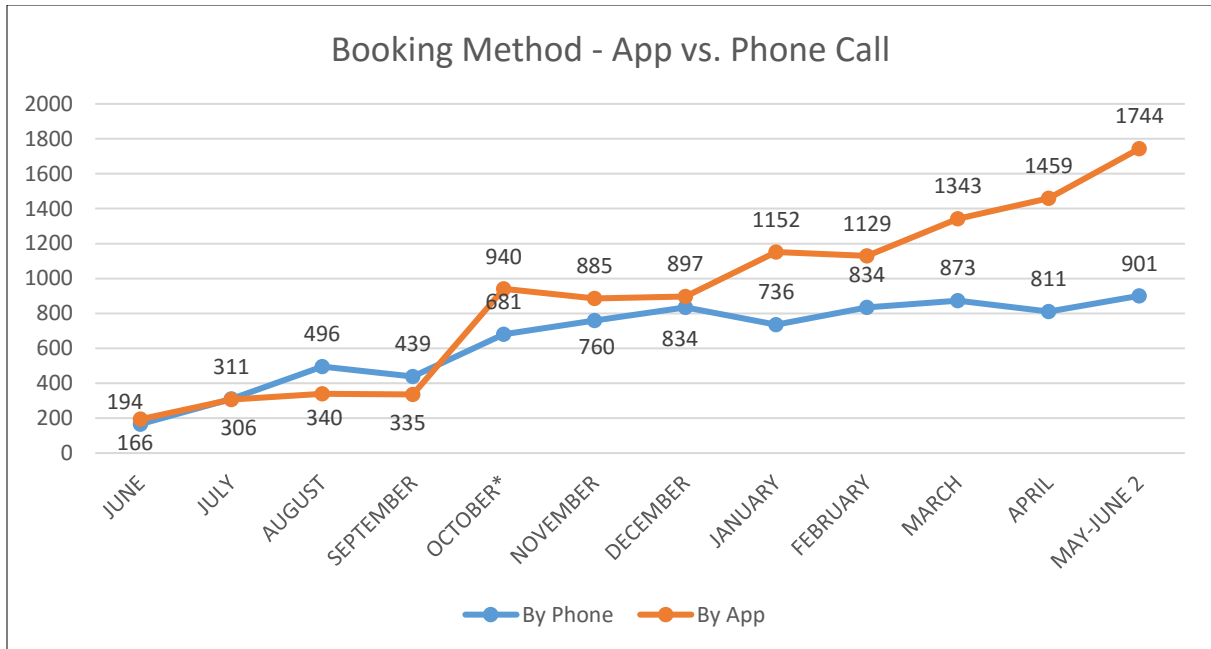
## **Media**

Public relations efforts included a press release, media pitches that led to news stories in print and on TV with both local and national outlets. Via also created a video about the service.

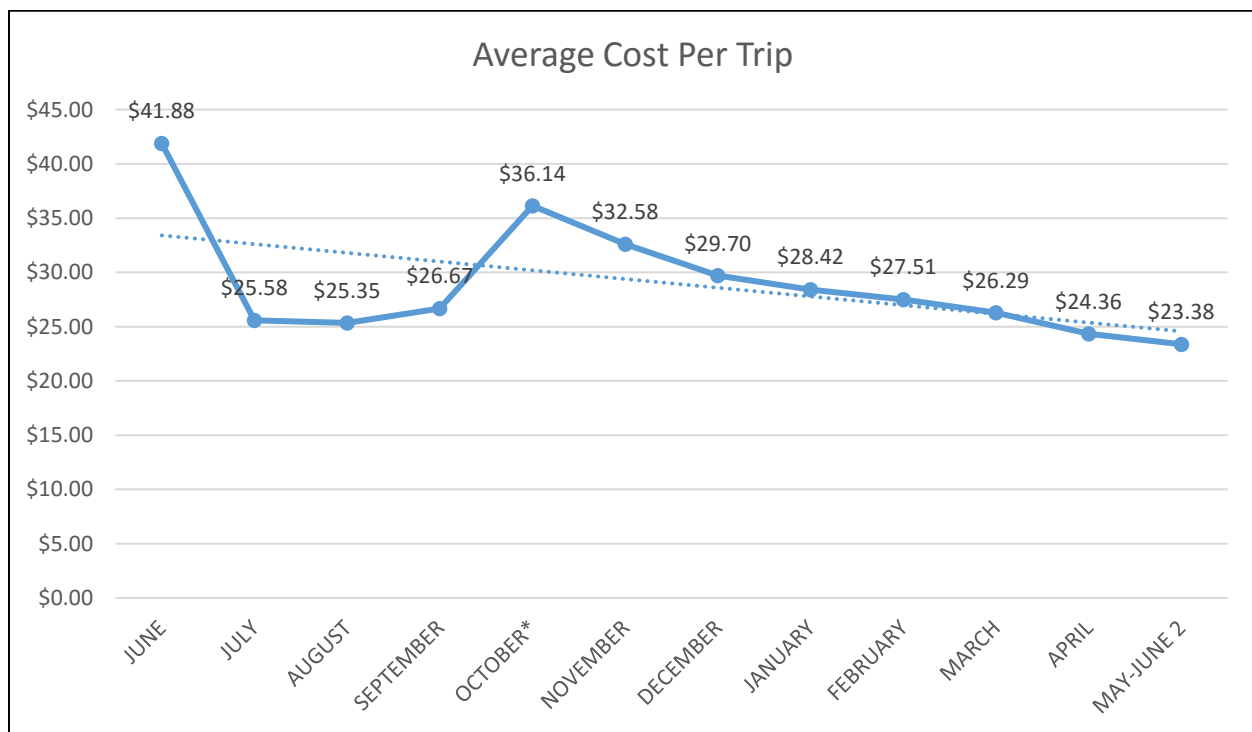
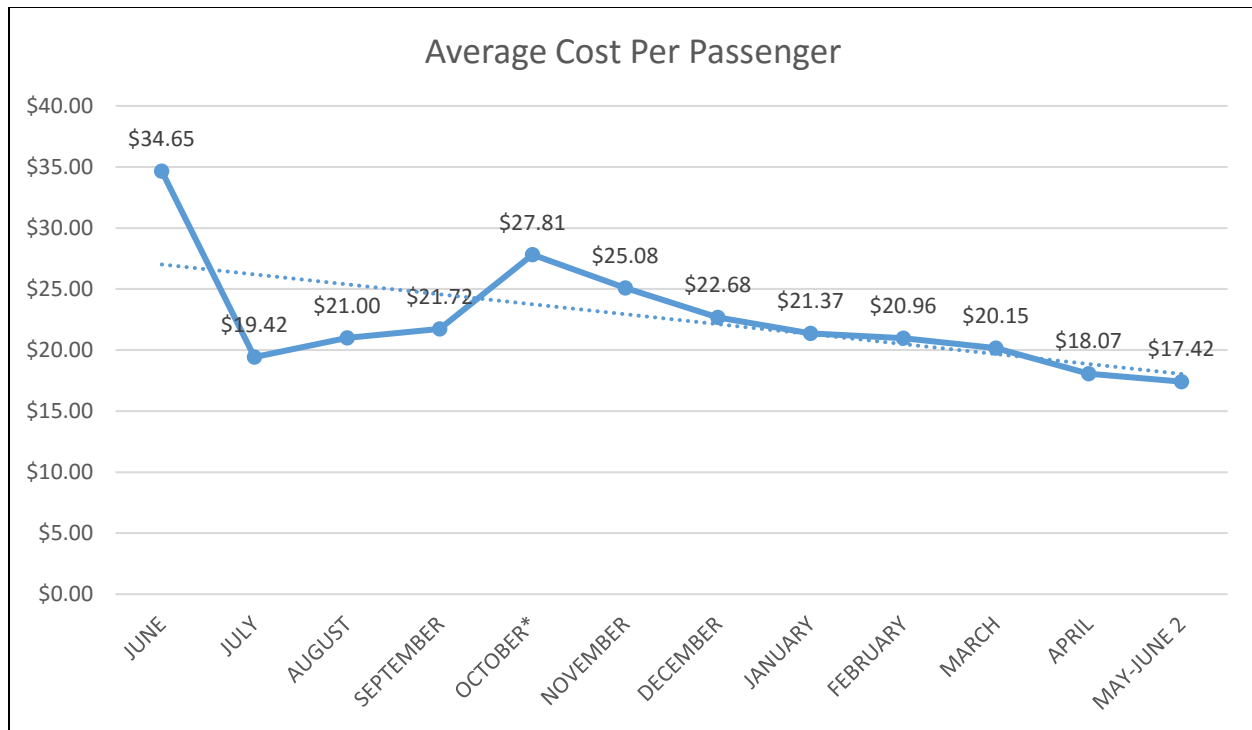
## V. Pickup Service Performance

Capital Metro has been pleased to see Pickup's performance across a range of key metrics:





As mentioned, Capital Metro has dedicated additional vehicles to the Pickup service as demand increased over time:

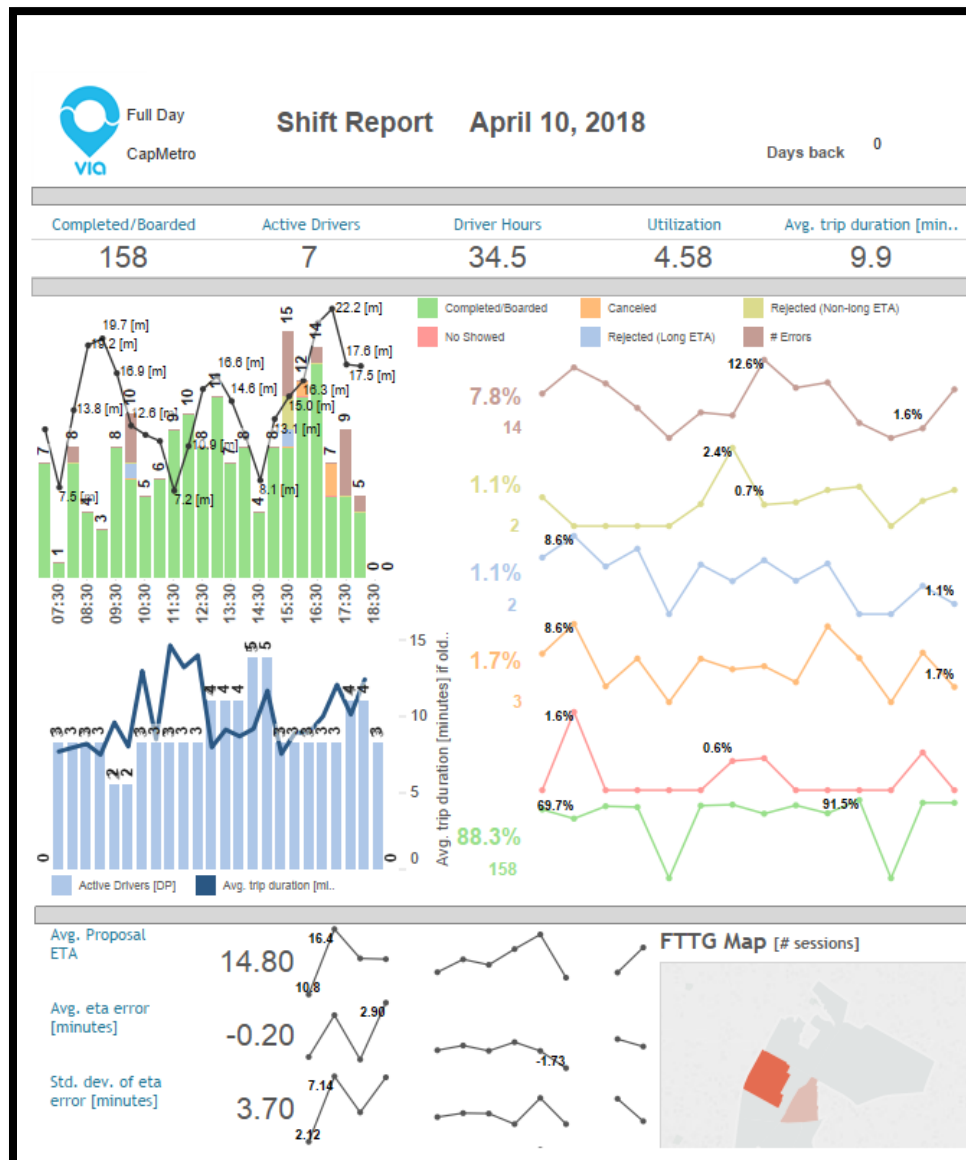


## VI. Performance Measurement Tools

### Standard Reports

To understand service performance on a day-to-day basis, Capital Metro uses the same suite of performance measurement and data collection tools used by Via to operate at scale in diverse transportation settings worldwide.

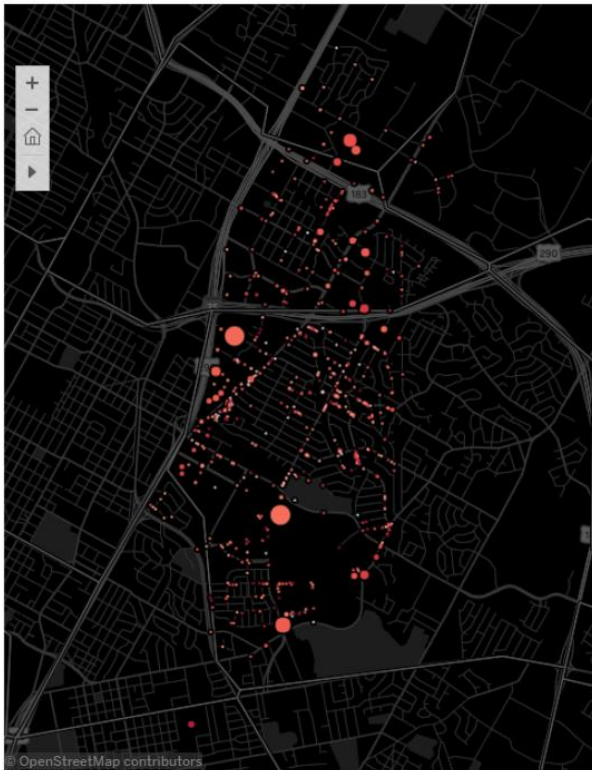
The tools are customizable and easy to understand. Below is an example of a 'Shift Report' – a daily digest of key service performance metrics:



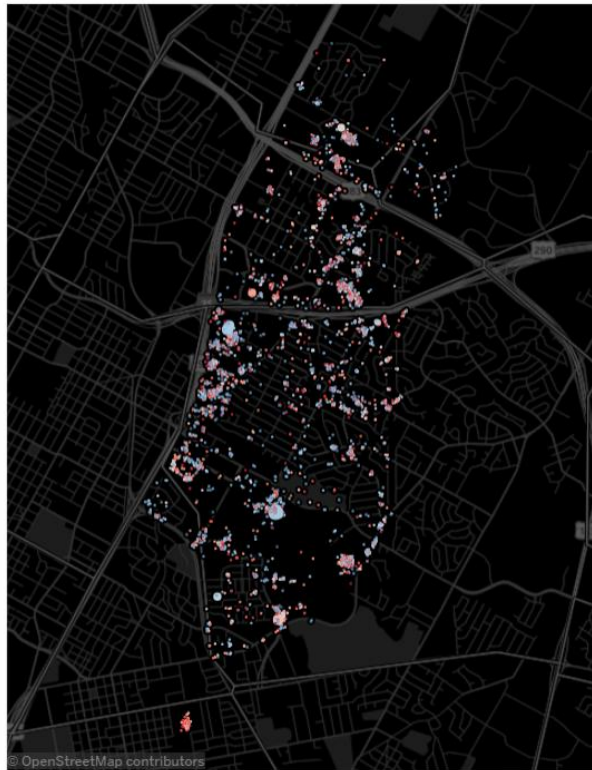
## Custom Reports

Via has also provided custom reports that provide a detailed look at a certain quality-of-service or performance metric – below are two such examples:

Average ETA



Average ETA- Requests



## VII. Pickup Driver and Rider Apps

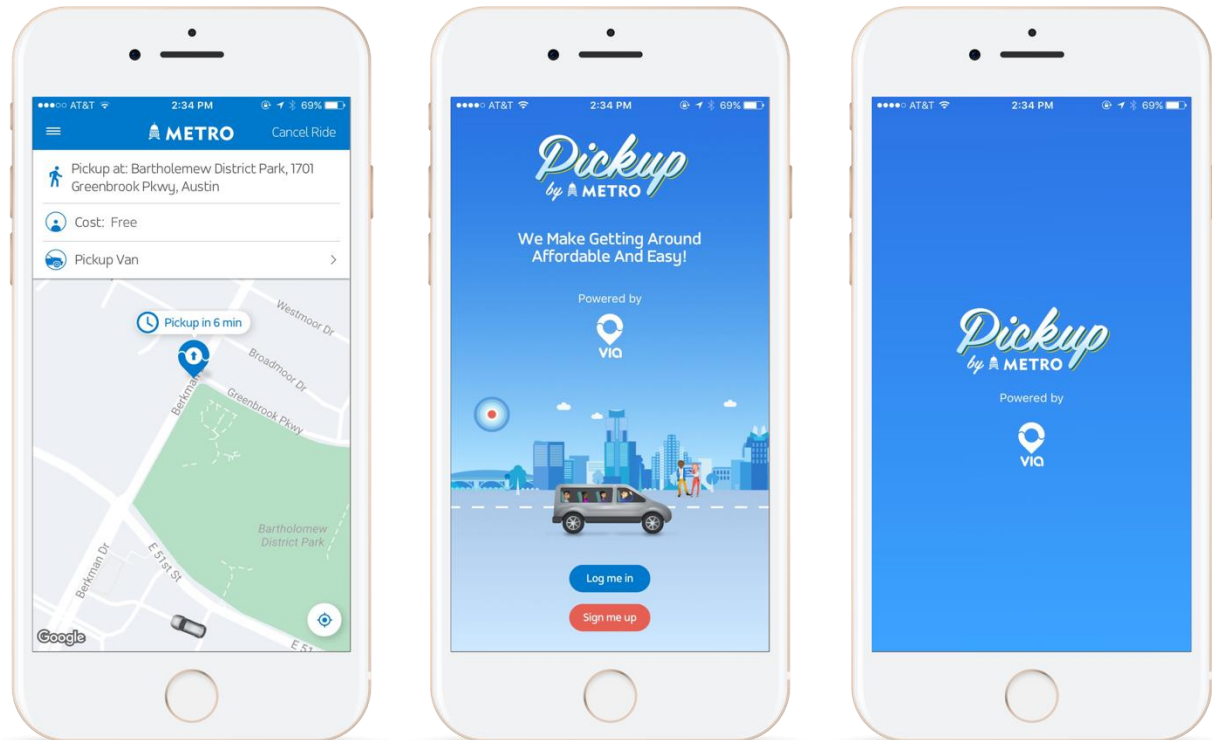
### Pickup Rider App

Below is the custom Pickup app's listing in the Apple iTunes Store:

#### **Customer Mobile App**



**Customer Rating in Google Play and Apple Store: 4+**



### **App Description:**

Pickup by CapMetro is a smarter way to get around Austin's Upper East Side. Book a premium ride whenever you want by using the Pickup app. Even better, it's free! Take a ride anywhere within your neighborhood at no cost with just the swipe of your finger.

Our revolutionary service allows you to seamlessly share your ride with other riders also going your way. Book a ride and in under a second our powerful algorithm matches you with a vehicle that can pick you up within 15 minutes. Pickup by CapMetro is a new model of on-demand transit — a tech-enabled bus that comes to you when and where you need it.

### Area we serve:

- Austin's Upper East Side and the surrounding area, from the Mueller neighborhood to up north near Rundberg and I-35.



#### How does Pickup work?

- Pickup is an on-demand transit service that takes multiple passengers heading in the same direction and books them into a shared vehicle. To use the Pickup app, type in your address and your destination and we'll match you with a vehicle going your way. We'll pick you up on a nearby corner and drop you off within a few blocks of your requested destination. Our algorithms provide trip times that are comparable to a taxi, even with multiple pickups along the way.
- Don't have a smartphone? Call 512-369-6200 to request a ride. We'll let you know the pickup and drop-off address of your vehicle, as well as its ETA.

#### When does it operate?

- The pilot program for Pickup by CapMetro will operate Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m.

#### How long will I wait?

- Our average wait time is 5 minutes, and you'll always get an accurate estimate of your pick-up ETA before booking. You can also track your car in real-time in the app.

#### How many passengers will I share a car with?

- The number of passengers you will share a ride with will vary based on capacity and your chosen destination. Our minibuses can easily accommodate up to 12 people.

#### How much will it cost me?

- For the launch of the service, you can ride for free — no credit card or cash collection required.

Try CapMetro's new on-demand service, serving Austin's Upper East Side.

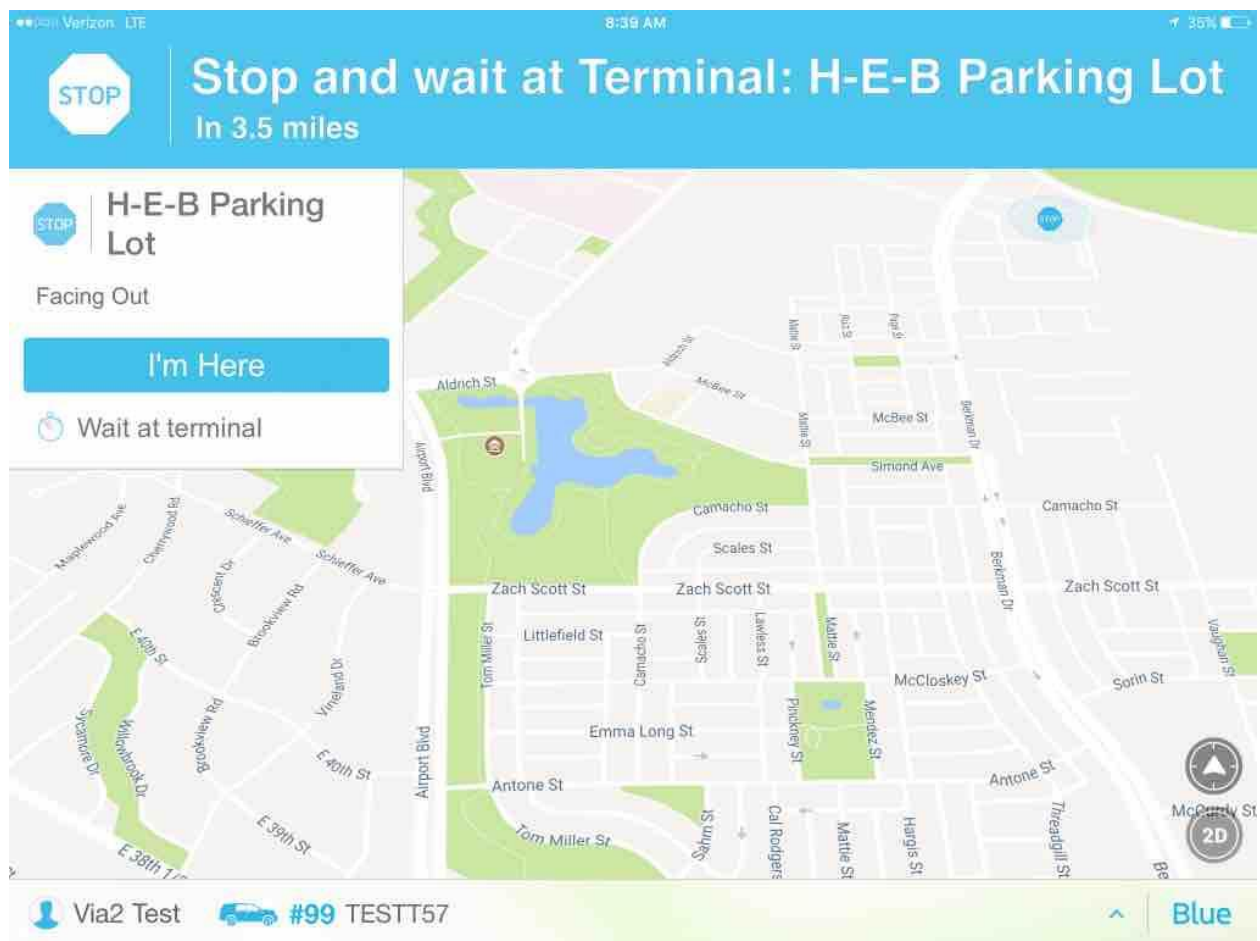
Love our app? Please rate us! Questions? Email us at [customerservice@capmetro.com](mailto:customerservice@capmetro.com).

## Via Driver App

The Via driver app provides continuously updated, turn-by-turn directions to and from each pickup/drop-off location.

Because Via operates more like a bus than a private car service, drivers do not have the option to accept or decline specific trip requests; the system automatically assigns each new ride to the vehicle best suited for it in order to maximize both quality of service and vehicle utilization - the number of passengers transported per vehicle per hour - across the entire service, dynamically re-routing the vehicle as required.

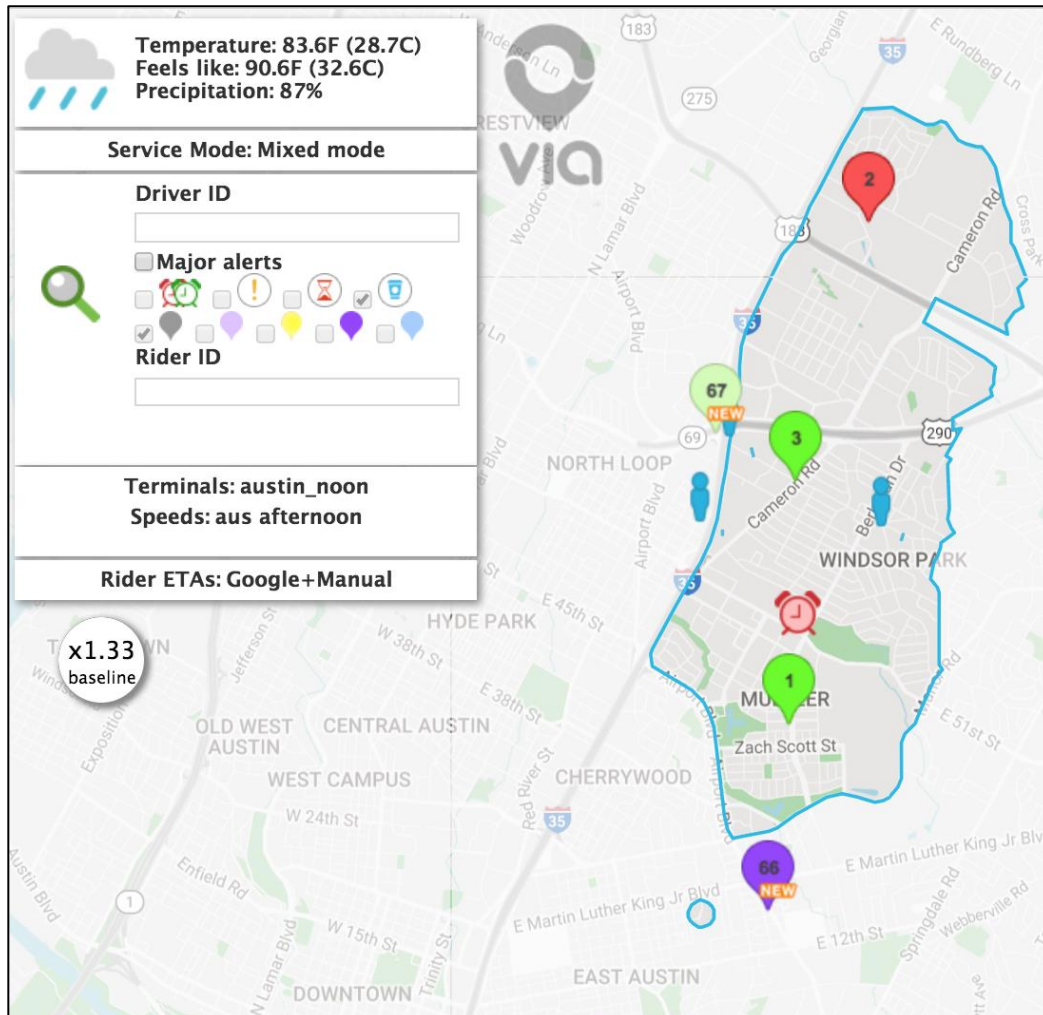
These instructions are delivered in a simple way, with routing, passenger manifests and other driver notifications appearing in a single place:



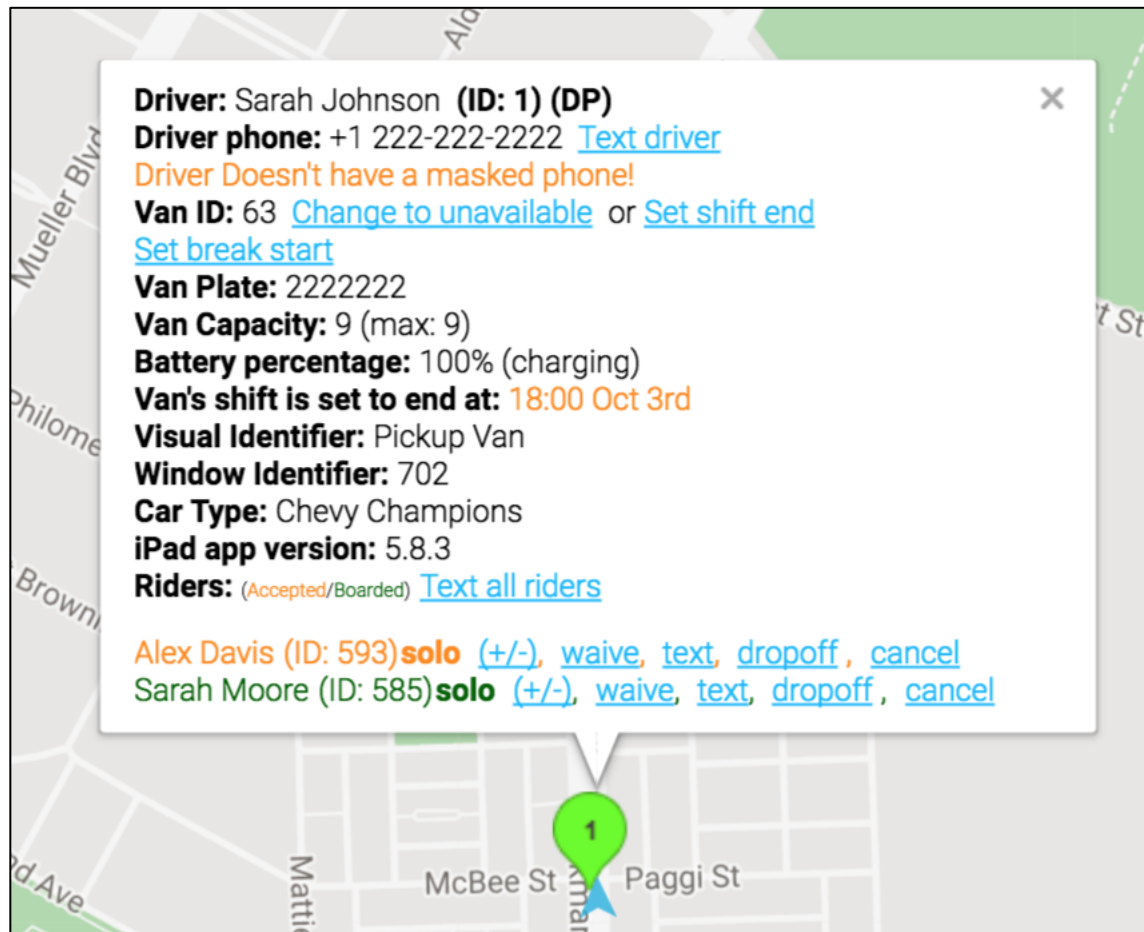
## VIII. Via Dispatch Platform

### The Via Visualizer

The Visualizer provides a comprehensive real-time service overview. It includes three dynamically-updated components: a color-coded map displaying vehicle and rider information (shown below); a dashboard providing a brief overview of key performance indicators; and, a filterable, interactive newsfeed recording every event that takes place within the system.



Clicking on an icon generates a popup box, allowing a dispatcher to instantly drill down into a high level of detail about any given vehicle or customer. For the former, that includes location, all relevant driver and vehicle ID information, the passengers currently on board, the passengers scheduled to be picked up, etc. For the latter, this includes all relevant account information, location, current and proposed ETAs, etc. Dispatchers can contact drivers and riders from within these popup boxes.



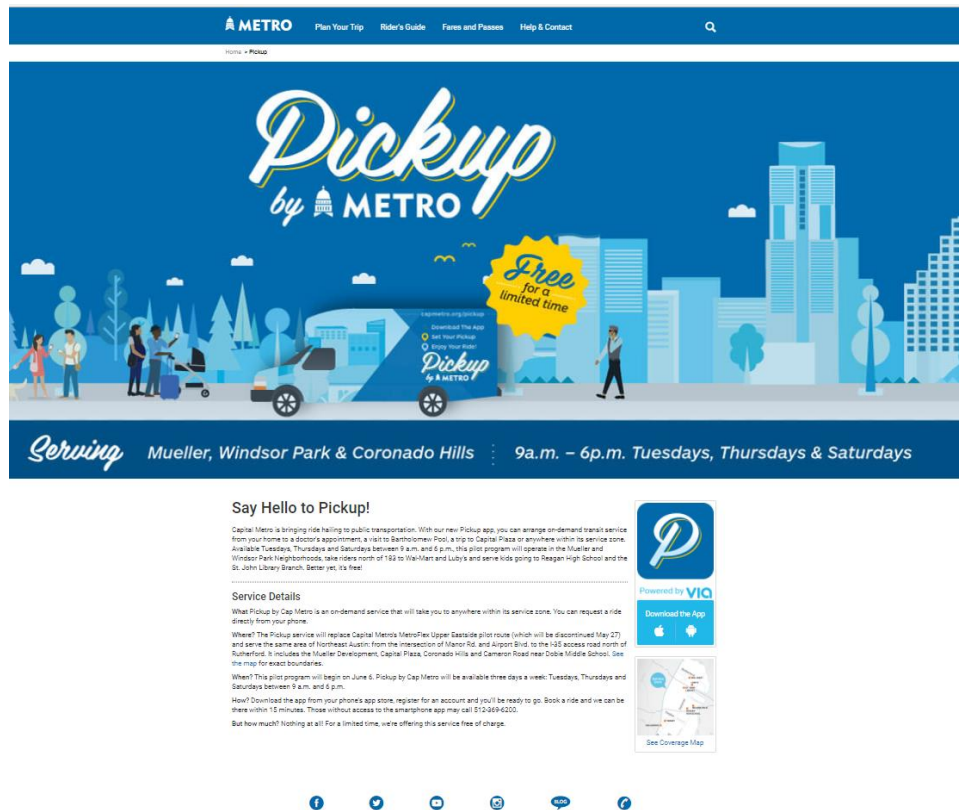
## IX. Branding & Media

### Vehicle Wrap



### Website

<https://www.capmetro.org/pickup/>



## Media Coverage

- [5/22/2017-Find out when Capital Metro will begin testing out new ride-hailing service in Mueller area](#) – Community Impact
- [5/32/2017-Capital Metro testing new free ride-hailing app in east, northeast Austin](#) - KXAN
- [5/24/2017-CapMetro Pickup Pilot Program](#) – KXAN (Video, 3 runs)
- [5/24/2017-Cap Metro Creates Ride Hailing App](#) – KVUE (Video)
- [5/24/2017-CapMetro Launches Free On-Demand Rides](#) – KLBJ (Audio)
- [5/24/2017-Capital Metro testing new free ride-hailing app in east, northeast Austin](#) – KXAN
- [5/31/2017-CapMetro Launching Ride Hailing Service](#) – KUT
- [5/24/2017-Upcoming Capital Metro Projects](#) – KLBJ (2 runs, corrections requested)
- [6/1/2017-Capital Metro to Launch Free On-Demand Service Called Pickup](#) – Mass Transit
- [6/5/2017-Wear: Cap Metro dabbles in ride-hailing with new 'Pickup' service](#) – Austin American Statesman
- [6/5/2017-Capital Metro launches new ride-hailing service, plus 4 other things you need to know in Central Austin this week](#) – Community Impact
- [6/5/2017-CapMetro Launches On-Demand Service in East Austin](#) – Austin Chronicle
- [6/6/2017-Cap Metro Launches Ride Hailing](#) – KXAN (Video, 3 runs)
- [6/5/2017-Cap Metro Launches Pick-Up](#) – Fox 7 News (Video, 2 runs)
- [6/7/2017-Ridesharing Pilot Program](#) – Fox 7 News (Video)



6/7/2017-[CapMetro Launches New Ride Sharing Service](#) – KVUE (Video, 2 runs)  
6/7/2017-[If You Can't Beat Em, Join 'Em](#) – Public  
6/7/2017-[Austin's Capital Metro Makes Like Uber and Lets Users Hail Their Ride](#) – Planetizen  
6/12/2017-[New Pick-up App](#) – Fox 7 News (Video)  
6/13/2017-[Why Uber Will Still Dominate](#) – CityLab  
6/19/2017-[Much Ado About Ridesharing](#) – Building ATX  
6/20/2017-[New ride-hailing service arrives in Austin — but it's not like Uber](#) – Culture Map Austin  
6/21/2017-[Public Transit Agencies Take a Lesson From Uber](#) – Wall Street Journal

## Media Talking Points

### Highlights

- Pickup by Cap Metro is an on-demand transit option that will take you from your front step to anywhere within its service area. You can request a ride directly from your phone with our new Pickup app.
- Capital Metro is the first transit agency to bring ride hailing to public transportation by operating this on-demand service.
- The service will be accessed through an app developed with Capital Metro partner Via, a New York-based company that is providing on-demand public transportation in New York City, Washington, D.C., and Chicago. Pickup by Cap Metro is the company's first venture with a public transit agency.

### Details

- The **free** pilot will go into effect June 4 and will be available three days a week: Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m.
- This **free** pilot program will operate in the Mueller and Windsor Park Neighborhoods, including retail areas in the Mueller Development and Capital Plaza, and taking riders north of 183 to Wal-Mart and Luby's. The Pickup will also be serving students going to Reagan High School and the St. John Branch Library.
- If you'd like to try it, it's very easy: just download the app from your phone's app store, register for an account and you'll be ready to go. Book a ride and we can be there within 15 minutes or plan ahead and arrange a pickup for later.
- Due to Capital Metro's responsibilities as a public transit agency and its need to serve the region's entire population, the Pickup service will also be available by a phone call. Riders without access to a smartphone may arrange a ride by calling 512-369-6200 and providing their pickup and drop-off addresses when making their reservation.
- What further sets us apart from other TNC services: Pickup by Cap Metro is entirely wheelchair accessible.

### Peer and Consultant Interest

Capital Metro has received inquiries from the following transit peers and consultants:

- RTS, Monroe County, NY (Rochester)
- Chicago RTA (Transit Agency)
- Metrolinx, Toronto, Ontario (Consultant)
- LTD, Eugene, OR (Transit Agency)
- WSP USA (Consultant)
- Foursquare
- Denton County Transit Authority
- Calgary Transit
- City of Eau Claire Transit
- DART (Transit Agency)
- SouthWest Transit, Minneapolis, MN
- MBTA, Boston, MA (Transit Agency)
- Maryland Transit Administration
- Transdev
- US GAO
- Harvard University Transit
- MnDOT Office of Transit
- Sparelabs (Consultant)
- City of Aspen
- City of San Jose, Dept of Transportation
- RTC of Southern Nevada (Transit Agency)
- City of West Sacramento
- RTD Denver



### Moving Forward

- Pickup by Capital Metro is a pilot program that will operate in the identified area until June 2, 2018.
- After the pilot period, Capital Metro will assess the service's performance and gauge public feedback before reporting back to the board of directors.
- The Pickup service replaces the MetroFlex Upper Eastside pilot program, which operated in the same area of the city. Though both pilot projects were initiated before the final Connections 2025 plan was released, these kinds of innovative services could be included in potential Mobility Innovation Zones provided by the plan.

## X. Launch Timeline

Description	Owner	Start	End
<b>Testing &amp; Training</b>		<b>4/17/2017</b>	<b>6/20/2017</b>
<b>Internal Product Testing</b>			
End-to-end pickup and drop-off flow (rider & driver)	Via	4/17/2017	4/19/2017
Routing and algorithm performance	Via	4/19/2017	4/21/2017
QA & further product fixes	Via	4/22/2017	5/3/2017
<b>Field Testing &amp; Training</b>			
Via internal field testing	Via	5/4/2017	5/7/2017
Onsite driver & operator training	Via	5/15/2017	6/1/2017
Via/client field testing & demonstration	Via/CMTA	5/15/2017	5/19/2017
Client sign-off	CMTA	5/24/2017	5/25/2017
App Live	Via	5/24/2017	5/24/2017
<b>Launch Follow-Up</b>		<b>6/6/2017</b>	<b>6/20/2017</b>
<b>Further Product Tweaks</b>			
Book Ride for Rider Adjustments	Via	6/7/2017	6/14/2017
Driver App Adjustments	Via	6/7/2017	6/14/2017
<b>CapMetro MARCOMM</b>		<b>3/13/2017</b>	<b>6/6/2017</b>
<b>Marketing</b>			
Vehicle Wrap	CMTA	3/13/2017	6/1/2017
Direct Mail 1	CMTA	4/12/2017	4/28/2017
Web Page	CMTA	4/24/2017	5/25/2017
<b>Community Involvement</b>			
Outreach Activities	CMTA	3/31/2017	6/14/2017
<b>Communications</b>			
In-app Messages	CMTA	4/10/2017	4/11/2017
Web/Direct Mail Copy	CMTA	4/21/2017	4/22/2017
News Release	CMTA	5/29/2017	5/30/2017
Social Media (first posts)	CMTA	5/19/2017	6/20/2017
Letter from Linda to employees	CMTA	6/2/2017	6/3/2017
Intranet post	CMTA	6/4/2017	6/5/2017
<b>System live (soft launch)</b>	<b>Via/CMTA</b>	<b>5/25/2017</b>	<b>6/5/2017</b>
<b>Service Launch</b>		<b>6/6/2017</b>	<b>6/6/2017</b>

## XI. Ridership

