



# MOBILITY ON DEMAND (MOD) SANDBOX

## Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA)

Public-Private-Partnership for Paratransit Mobility on Demand  
Demonstration (P4-MOD)

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### TEAM, BUDGET AND WAIVERS

**Key Partners:** Lyft, United Taxi, CareRide, University of South Florida Center for Urban Transportation Research, and a replacement technology partner to be identified

**Other Partners:** None

**Budget Summary:** The budget from the applicant is summarized below:

MOD Sandbox Demonstration Federal Amount (\$)	MOD Sandbox Cost Share (\$)	Total Cost
\$500,000	\$125,000	\$625,000

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### INNOVATION: PROJECT APPROACH

Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) has assembled a unique multi-partner service with the goal of demonstrating an innovative approach to more effective and efficient paratransit by utilizing new technology available through transportation network companies (TNCs) to provide on-demand service. The project will leverage existing partnerships with United Taxi and CareRide and foster a new key partnership with Lyft to develop and demonstrate a model that will provide cost-effective, on-demand door-to-door paratransit service. Lyft will participate as an additional on-demand ambulatory and wheelchair accessible vehicle platform to complement the existing three partners.

The primary goals of the Public-Private-Partnership for Paratransit Mobility on Demand project are to improve the mobility of paratransit customers and their overall access to the community, and to demonstrate that on-demand trips can be provided cost effectively. PSTA currently provides service to over 12,500 eligible ADA paratransit customers, performing over 275,000 annual paratransit trips through its Demand Response Transportation (DART) Program. As reported in the 2013 – 2017 Pinellas County Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan, this represents more than 10% of the population who have been qualified for paratransit service through the Americans with Disabilities Act.

To achieve the project goals, PSTA will utilize a new centralized dispatching technology that will allow PSTA to offer a rider multiple transportation provider options, including TNCs, taxis, and wheelchair vans if necessary, based on estimated arrival time and cost.

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### CHALLENGES PROJECT IS DESIGNED TO ADDRESS

PSTA currently spends an average of \$22.50/ride for the more than 250,000 annual DART paratransit trips for a total of approximately \$6.2M annually or 10% of the agency's operating budget. With an increasingly aging population fueling a growing demand for paratransit services and no new revenue sources on the horizon, PSTA will be faced with the need to divert critical funding away from fixed route services to continue to provide paratransit services as required under the ADA. In Fiscal Years 2015 and 2016, PSTA saw increases in paratransit

operating expenses rise nearly 9% and 5% respectively, and the agency is anticipating an additional 10% increase in costs associated with the recent procurement of a new paratransit provider contract.

PSTA's current paratransit services are operated by one local company that provides both ambulatory and wheelchair trips. Eligible riders may reserve trips up to one month prior, but no later than 5:00 p.m. the day before a trip. Further limiting flexibility for customers, once dropped off, passengers must wait at least 30 minutes between drop-off and pick up times. For medical trips where the end time is unknown, customers have to wait up to an hour to be picked up. This lack of flexibility and pick up time reliability are common complaints from paratransit customers.

The project is designed to demonstrate a streamlined approach to accessing and deploying a more flexible and cost-effective transportation option for these customers. TNC coverage in Pinellas County is among the best in urbanized areas of Florida with an average response time of under 7 minutes. Transit agencies around the country, including PSTA, are partnering with TNCs to provide innovative solutions to many of the challenges faced by transit agencies. However, the use of TNCs does pose some of its own challenges, such as equitable access to all members of the community, including those who do not have smartphones which are typically required to get TNC service. This project is designed to address this by utilizing new software and PSTA's Credit Merchant Services vendor that will allow a customer to call into PSTA for the vehicle dispatch and to pay the fare. In addition to new technology, this project will assist in identifying regulatory/legal barriers that currently prevent widespread implementation, as well as, key performance indicators that can be used throughout the industry.

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## ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES, BENEFITS, IMPACTS

Providing TNC service and applying the TNC model of on-demand service and dispatch to existing transportation providers will greatly improve the flexibility and reliability of PSTA paratransit services. Using a combination of new emerging technologies, and improved alternatives for paratransit customers, PSTA expects to see a significant cost savings compared to the traditional services offered presently. Moreover, in providing same day on-demand services from multiple providers, PSTA anticipates an overall higher quality of paratransit service integration into the public transit network as a whole. In addition to transportation services provided, PSTA is expects to be able to demonstrate the benefits of integrating existing credit merchant payment services into the overall service experience; adding to the effectiveness of the proposed demonstration.

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