

# *Paratransit Forward* Study



# Project Goal

To evaluate UTA's existing paratransit service and the transportation needs of riders with disabilities and evaluate options for how UTA can expand or improve paratransit service, and the customer experience.

# Funding

- **87.5%** - Areas of Persistent Poverty (AoPP) Grant awarded by FTA to UTA in 2023
- **12.5%** - matching contribution from University of Utah and Via Mobility, LLC



# Existing Paratransit Service Performance

## Ridership Trends (2022):

- Weekdays: **1,123 trips/day** | Weekends: **121 trips/day**
- **60%** of users take at least 5 trips per week
- The **top 30** most visited locations account for **25% of total trips**
- **10%** of trips are inter-county

## Travel Time Performance:

- Average trip duration: **44 minutes.**
  - Generally faster than same trip by fixed-route transit
- **98%** of trips meet ADA standards.
  - Standard: comparable to fixed-route transit



# Stakeholder and Community Engagement



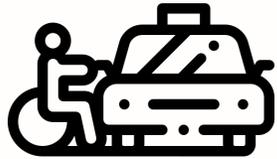
- **3** Committee on Accessible Transportation (CAT) meetings
- **3** Paratransit ride-alongs
- **16** stakeholder interviews
- **319** Completed paratransit rider surveys\*
- **30** Paratransit rider interviews\*

\*Includes *potential* riders



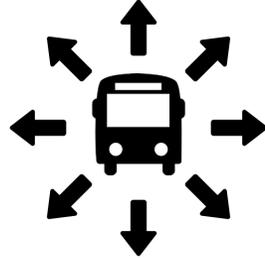
# Alternatives Analysis

1



Integrate With Transportation Network Companies (TNCs)

2



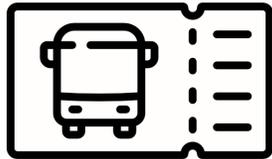
Coverage Expansion  
(three approaches)

3



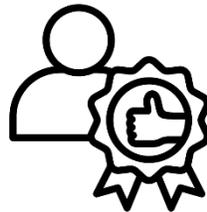
Commingle With On Demand  
(three approaches)

4



Reduced Off-Peak Fare

5



Additional Eligibility Centers

6



Rider App/Web Portal and Communication

The alternatives discussed are **not formal recommendations** but **conceptual options** for UTA to consider.



# Alternative 1

## Integration with Transport Network Companies (TNCs)

### Why Consider Integration With TNCs?

- A “pressure relief valve” to meet additional demand when **short-staffed**.
- If desired: enables real-time or same-day trip bookings, low-cost expansion option

### How it Works:

- **Eligible trips:** Rider is determined able to use a TNC **without an attendant**, the trip is **casual** (not subscription), and the rider is **ambulatory**. (22% of trips meet these criteria)
- Three fare subsidy models considered in analysis
  - Most cost-efficient: **Co-pay subsidy model** (Rider pays \$4, UTA pays up to \$20 after)



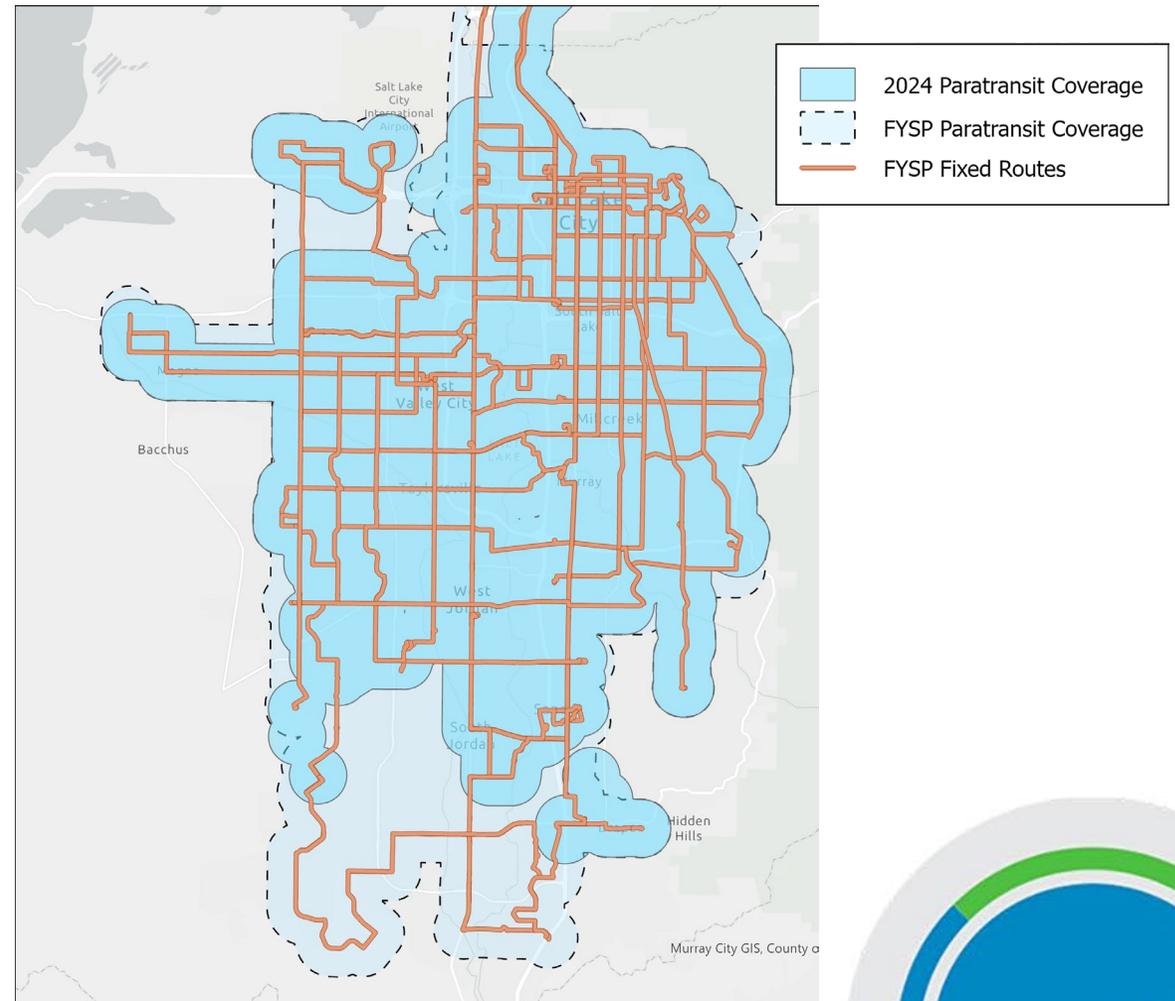
# Alternative 2

## Coverage Expansion

### Why Consider Coverage Expansion?

- **53%** of current paratransit riders reported being unable to use paratransit for some trips due to  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile boundary from fixed-routes
- Expanding coverage improves **accessibility, equity, and service flexibility**

**Three Expansion Approaches** described in the following slides assume implementation of the Five-Year Service Plan for 2025-2029.



**Existing Paratransit Coverage and proposed expansion under FYSP in Salt Lake County**



# Alternative 2 (continued)

## Coverage Expansion Approaches – How They Work

### 2a: Legacy Service Continuation

- Maintains paratransit coverage that would be **otherwise removed** due to changes to fixed routes
- Ensures continuity of service for existing riders and enables greater service planning flexibility

### 2b: 1-Mile (or more) Premium Expansion

- Extends coverage **up to 2 miles** from fixed-route service
- Additional service not subject to fare and distance standards
- Practiced by at least a dozen peer agencies in the US

### 2c: Expansion into Innovative Mobility Zones (IMZs)

- Does **not commingle** paratransit with On Demand
- More scalable and adaptable than fixed-route-based expansions



# Alternative 3

## Commingling Paratransit with UTA On Demand

### Why Consider Commingling?

- Improves service flexibility and vehicle utilization while maintaining ADA compliance
- Potential cost savings and operational efficiency

### How it Works: Transfers certain paratransit trips to be served by UTA On Demand

- Does not change the existing paratransit service area or IMZ boundaries
- Requires **additional training** for On Demand operators and addressing **existing capacity issues**

### Options in the Analysis:

1. Commingling **within IMZs**
2. Commingling **within IMZs and nearby catchment areas**
3. Commingling **peak hour trips less than 20 or 35 minutes in duration**



# Alternative 4

## Off-Peak Fare Adjustments

### Why Consider Lowering Off-Peak Fares?

- **70%** of paratransit trips occur during peak hours, straining resources
- Can **shift demand** to other times through a financial incentive for riders
- Aligns with best practices from other transit agencies.

### How it Works:

- The greater the fare reduction (\$1, \$2), the less revenue collected but more trips shifted
- Fleet and staffing optimization, on-time performance due to less peak-heavy ridership



# Alternative 5

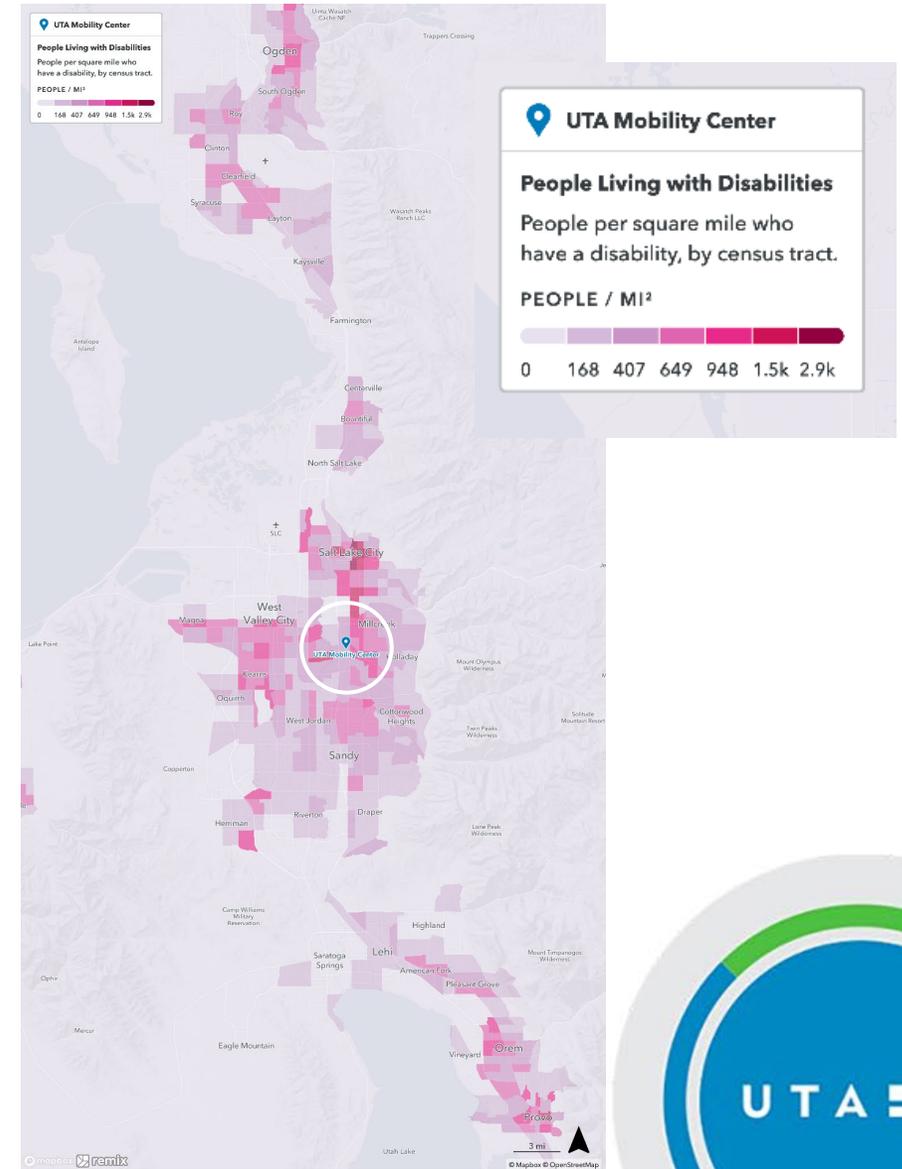
## Expanding Eligibility Centers

### Why Consider Expanding Eligibility Centers?

- Currently, all applicants must visit the **Mobility Center in Murray**, which is centrally located but requires applicants outside Salt Lake County to travel farther.

### How it Works:

- Operate additional eligibility centers throughout the service area.
- Lower Cost Alternatives:
  - Wheelchair evaluation centers for interim evaluations
  - Partner with community organizations to use existing facilities



# Alternative 6

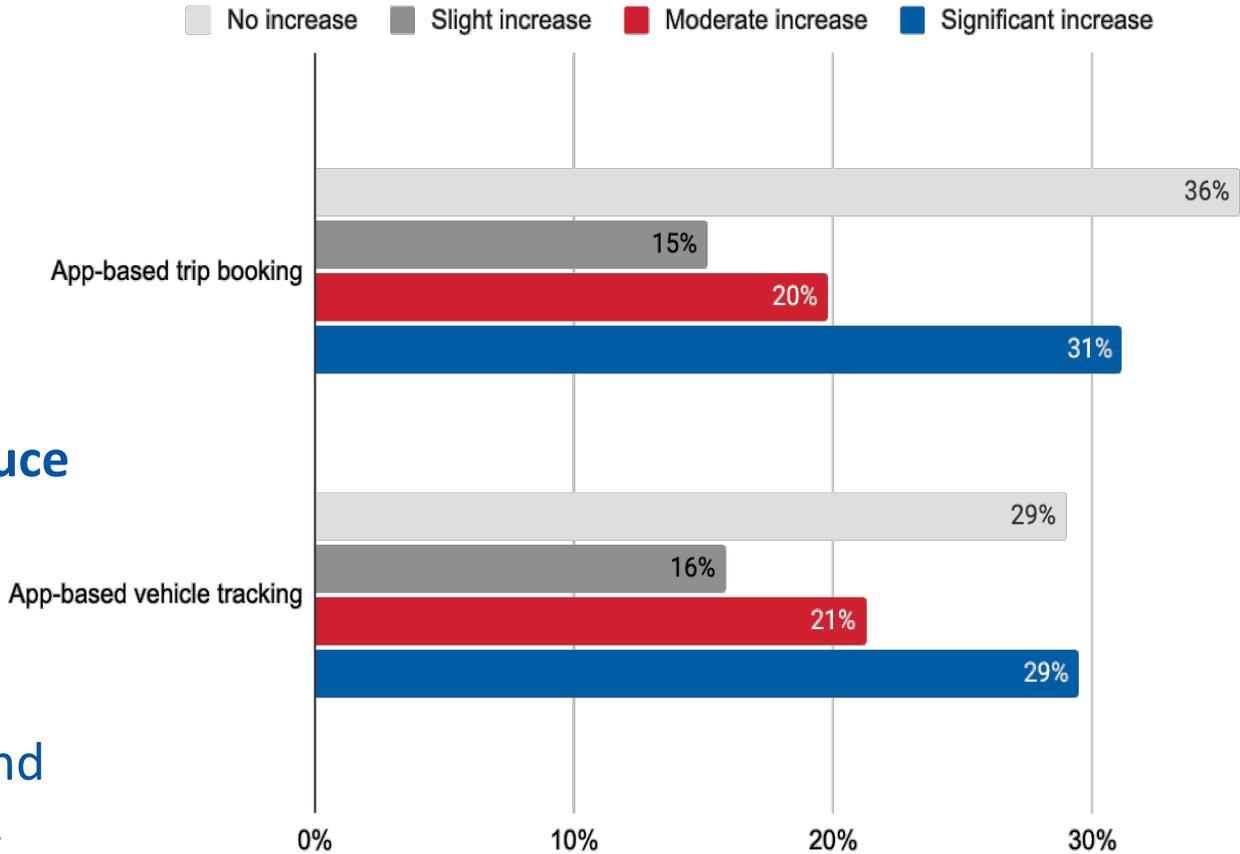
## Rider App & Web Portal

### Why Consider Rider App and Web Portal?

- Reducing manual processes improves **service reliability, customer satisfaction, and can reduce phone calls** for staff.

### How it Works:

- Allows riders to book, edit, and cancel trips, and track arrival times without needing to call UTA staff.
- Requires digital accessibility considerations for all users.



*Rider Survey results indicating impact on riders' likelihood to use paratransit services*



# Next Steps

- ✓ **Evaluate and Prioritize Alternatives** – Align with UTA’s strategic goals and long-range plans.
- ✓ **Engage Stakeholders** – Ensure ADA compliance, gather feedback, and refine alternatives.
- ✓ **Long Range Transit Plan** – Incorporate alternatives (if applicable) as part of a comprehensive transit vision.

## Challenges and Considerations:

- ⚠ **Cost vs. Benefit Trade-offs** – Some alternatives may require significant upfront or long-term investment.
- ⚠ **Capacity & Service Coordination** – Ensuring seamless integration with existing operations.
- ⚠ **Regulatory & Compliance Requirements** – Ensuring compliance with ADA, FTA, and local regulations.



# ***Paratransit Forward***

