

S-4 Dial-a-Ride Service Consistency

Initiative: Explore ways of streamlining DAR marketing, staffing, customer service, eligibility, reservations, and service hours across the region.

implement
now

implement
later

FURTHER
INVESTIGATE

Supports Goals:

Equity, Responsiveness, Adaptability, Collaboration, Diversity, Fiscal Solvency, and Integrity

The region's many Dial-a-Ride (DAR) zones serve a range of different purposes. These services fulfill a critical need for townships, counties and other local community organizations to provide medical and general purpose service that can be customized to individual needs. While these services do not generate high levels of ridership, they are numerous in the six-county area, are carefully crafted to suit context-sensitive needs, and provide extensive coverage-based service for those who meet eligibility criteria.

However, as MPC notes in their Universal Mobility Report, "service conditions can vary significantly within each county. With such structures, not all jurisdictions choose to participate, resulting in inequitable transportation services among communities within the same county."¹⁸ While there may be good reasons to retain customization of some DAR services, others may be ripe for streamlining in concert with the coordinated services approach that many counties in the region have been pursuing.

A working group with elected officials and human service agencies that fund DAR programs may be an option for further investigating this use. Such a group could potentially be tasked with streamlining operating policies across the region and to develop a framework for how these services should interact with each other and with the broader public transit network. The existing group that has participated in the 2021 RTA Human Service Transportation Plan effort may be a good starting point for this exercise.

The standardization process may include exploring grant opportunities so that the resources requested would align with Pace's expectations for service consistency. These steps would target supporting a more effective regional transit network and a more consistent experience for DAR customers. Improvements to marketing, branding and communicating the service can also be further investigated to support this initiative.

 Metropolitan Planning Council



¹⁸ *Toward Universal Mobility: Charting a Path to Improve Transportation Accessibility.* Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC). December, 2019. www.metroplanning.org. Page 38.