

VENTURA COUNTY DEMAND-RESPONSE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE PLAN

The Customer Experience

The Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC), along with the local transit providers, recognizes the importance of enhancing the on-demand and paratransit customer experience; and believes there are areas for improvement and piloted service models which can be implemented before considering integration of services. This includes what most cities in Ventura County provide as “dial-a-ride” (DAR), paratransit, and in a few cases, microtransit.

Baseline Agreement of Stipulations

It is important operators first agree on the following goals and stipulations, while also ensuring compliance with regulations established by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA):

- **Enhance the overall rider experience**, including for those who may need to travel regionally or outside of their hometown.
- Maintain full **compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** of 1990 and its complementary paratransit requirements.
- Deliver a coordinated, community-level mix of public transportation services that meets local mobility needs while **avoiding duplication or competition among providers**.
- Improve the return on public investment in demand-response services by **increasing productivity and implementing cost control techniques**.

Ventura County’s Transportation Commission Goal

With the conclusion of the Transit Integration and Efficiency Study (TIES) study in 2023, the Commission sought the adoption of Alternative #1, which considered a partial consolidation of subregional demand-response services and enhanced agency coordination; and a continued study of Alternative #2, consolidation of all demand-response services into a new countywide agency and consolidation of fixed-route services by geography. At the time of this study, Alternative #1 was not pursued.

Current Assessment of Demand-Response Systems

All communities comply with the ADA by providing complementary paratransit services to eligible riders, a service that needs to be maintained or replaced with alternatives that meet ADA rules outlined in FTA Circular 4701.1 (42 USC 12101-12213). All operators also provide paratransit services to seniors as well.

At the time of this writing, all agencies (with the exception of Simi Valley’s DAR system, which will transition to RideCo at the end of 2026) are on the RideCo software platform allowing on-demand transportation to be dispatched dynamically – meaning, rides are scheduled in real-time to account for detours, construction, schedules changes, and fleet optimization.

Guiding Principles and Actions for Customer Improvement

Over the years and even since the effort on this plan began, there have been many improvements to DAR services countywide. Over the years, direct service between jurisdictions has improved tremendously. Policy alignment has steadily improved over time and all agencies joining RideCo has been a significant improvement both on the customer side and on the backend. The next step for agencies is to adopt a defined set of principles and actions to improve customer service.

This plan recommends VCTC contract with an independent Client Representative to coordinate and lead the effort towards improved customer service. Additional details on procuring and collaborating with a Client Representative are provided in the Strategy Detail section.

Principles

Promoting and facilitating existing fixed-route services - While on-demand transportation services offer a high level of convenience and are more attractive to riders than fixed-route options, they are significantly more costly to operate and inherently less efficient in terms of passengers served per hour. Therefore, it is important for all agencies to align on-going strategies which encourage general public ridership on fixed-route services, through travel training, targeted marketing, and service improvements outlined in the fixed-route portion of the Short Range Transit Plan (SRTTP), while preserving on-demand capacity for individuals who rely on it most.

Countywide ADA eligibility - All operators in Ventura County currently utilize a single outsourced contractor (through an arrangement with VCTC) to administer ADA eligibility determinations. This approach promotes consistency, efficiency, and a uniform understanding of certification requirements across the region. Maintaining this model is recommended, as it supports clear communication and ongoing education for both current and future ADA riders.

Embracing Dynamic Scheduling - The scheduling platform provided by RideCo is highly effective in optimizing on-demand service by maximizing passenger trips per vehicle hour. Operators must actively collaborate with RideCo to ensure the system is calibrated for optimal performance. Operators should also leverage RideCo's data-driven insights to identify areas of increased demand and adjust resources as needed, such as (a) deploying additional vehicles or scheduling more drivers during peak periods, (b) evaluate maximum ride time constraints, (c) transfer coordination, (d) adjusting pickup windows, and (e) evaluating the mix of advanced reservation versus same-day mix. Achieving an effective balance between operational constraints, workforce availability, and system optimization will require ongoing coordination and refinement, and will be led by the Client Representative.

One Mobile Application - The RideCo mobile application is highly customizable and is currently configured to reflect the branding of individual jurisdictions. While this supports local identity and is understood by the same people who use the system regularly, it can turn off potential users, looking to travel outside their town. Fragmented branding makes difficult for future users to understand system connectivity. It also makes it difficult to recognize what services are available to them.

To enhance customer experience, a unified, regional RideCo mobile app is recommended. A single interface improves clarity, increases awareness of services, and reduces perceived barriers to

use. This also aligns with the TIES and SRTP strategy to maximize promotional marketing effectiveness by utilizing a single countywide brand and collateral.

RideCo's platform can support a unified front-end customer experience while maintaining separate, agency-specific configurations on the back end (allowing providers to retain operational control). RideCo's platform will use geofencing to determine which provider is responsible for fulfilling a trip. When a rider requests a trip, the system assigns it to the appropriate operator based on origin, destination, and service rules. The software is structured so that each participating agency operates within its own "tenant" on the back end.

One Phone Number – In addition to the one mobile app, a single regional phone number should be created. Modern call center software enables the use of one centralized phone number while allowing call takers to remain distributed across multiple locations. There are a few solutions that support this approach.

RideCo is designed to integrate call center technology through its open API architecture and specific features. RideCo can work alongside existing call center technology to handle transit reservations and customer support.

Aside from RideCo, the two main options for one-number call center integration are:

- **Intelligent/Geofence routing** can automatically direct incoming calls to the most appropriate agent or agency based on predefined rules and real-time conditions, rather than assigning calls to the next available representative.
- **Interactive Voice Response (IVR)**, (i.e. phone tree), can be used to guide callers through a menu of options using keypad or voice commands. This allows calls to be categorized and routed appropriately before reaching a live agent.

Localized Dispatching – To support a stronger focus on customer service (and less resource attention to dispatch consolidation) dispatching functions will remain at the local level. Agencies can continue dispatching for both demand-response and fixed-route operations, avoiding the need to separate functions.

Maintaining local dispatch, however, requires regional consistency for regional ride requests. This includes standardized customer service policies (discussed in the following section) and reducing manual intervention in RideCo's automated dynamic scheduling. RideCo can apply a centralized trip brokerage logic where a rules-based, algorithm-driven layer determines how regional trips are allocated across the system. Under this model, each agency retains control over its own operations (vehicles, drivers, and day-to-day dispatch decisions) while the platform enables regional optimization where appropriate. RideCo also supports standardized data structures, enabling information sharing across agencies while keeping certain datasets separate.

However, it would be prudent to reconsider consolidated dispatching in the future after progress on all strategies occurs, regardless of whether there is a transition to full consolidation or not.

Service Branding - In addition to developing one mobile app, the Client Representative will convene agencies to create a regional branding initiative centered on customer service and improving regional mobility. This effort should articulate the intended outcomes of brand uniformity, *namely*, to remove existing barriers and make transit easier to understand for riders who currently travel across jurisdictional boundaries and increase mobility choice . The goal is to increase

continuity between operators. Operators would retain their existing branding, and this initiative would be in addition. Roles and responsibilities associated with this effort are detailed in the Strategy Detail section.

The Client Representative will review current agency branding, service names, and logos; identifying customer pain points such as confusion around service boundaries, eligibility, and booking processes; and assessing communication channels, including the RideCo app, the agencies' websites, call center practices, and printed materials. This process should reveal inconsistencies and help with policy uniformity (discussed later in this chapter). A key point to investigate is public perception of "who various services are for." Awareness that local cities operated local bus service that was open to all (as opposed to just "for seniors" or "for students") was a perception issue raised in the SRTP.

There is a chart (on the following page) listing all the various on-demand systems, their nomenclature, and their logos.

The next step involves developing branding elements that are applied across the system. These include the service name, tagline, visual identity, and messaging guidelines. Suggestions on uniform branding are included in the Strategy Detail section.

Chart 1 Ventura County Dial-a-Ride Systems

Town	Type of Service	Service Name	Fleet Look
Simi Valley	ADA/DAR	ADA/DAR	
Simi Valley	On-Demand	Simi Valley Transit On-Demand	
Thousand Oaks	Dial-a-Ride	T.O Dial-a-Ride	
ECTA	Dial-a-Ride	ECTA CONNECT	
Camarillo	Dial-a-Ride	CAT Dial-a-Ride	
Moorpark	Dial-a-Ride	Senior Dial-A-Ride Program	
Moorpark	Micro-transit	MCT On Demand	
Valley Express	Dial-a-Ride	Dial-a-Ride	
Gold Coast	Dial-a-Ride	Go Access	

Uniform policy and policy alignment

Establishing uniform policies is essential in a countywide, multi-agency system. Consistent policies improve the rider experience, enhance operational efficiency, and enable RideCo to operate seamlessly across jurisdictions. Ventura County agencies have already made progress toward greater alignment; formalizing these efforts—and holding agencies accountable through clear metrics and reporting—is a critical next step.

Policy review should specifically include the following:

No-show and late cancellation policies are essential to protecting system capacity and ensuring efficient service delivery. When riders fail to appear for scheduled trips or cancel with insufficient notice, valuable vehicle availability and driver time are lost—resources that could otherwise be used to serve other passengers.

To promote consistency across providers, participating agencies should adopt a standard practice of waiting no more than five (5) minutes beyond the scheduled pickup window before designating a trip as a no-show. Additionally, trips canceled within two (2) hours of the scheduled pickup time should be classified as late cancellations.

Agencies should also establish performance expectations to monitor system impacts, with a recommended benchmark that no-shows and late cancellations combined do not exceed 10 percent of total monthly trips.

While the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) recommends a two-step no-show policy based on a rider's frequency of use, this Customer Experience Plan encourages agencies to implement policies that are practical, transparent, and enforceable. For example, a clearly defined threshold—such as three no-shows within a specified period resulting in temporary suspension—may be more effective in practice.

As noted by the FTA, “Regardless of the methodology chosen, agencies must be prepared to explain to FTA during oversight activity how their threshold represents a pattern or practice consistent with § 37.125(h).”¹

Dwell Time - All agencies should implement the same dwell time (how long a vehicle waits at pickup) which directly impacts schedule reliability and prevents delays from cascading across the system. Dwell time should be no more than 5 minutes.

Mix of Advanced Reservations / Subscriptions / Same-Day - Balancing trip types are important to efficiency and equity. Advanced reservations improve planning, subscription rides support frequent riders, and same-day trips increase flexibility and customer satisfaction. This blend allows for maximum fleet efficiency, as well as ensure equitable service to a diverse set of needs. Per ADA regulation (49C.F.R. Section 37.131(b) *“permits a transit operator to provide subscription service above the 50% ceiling if it finds it has excess capacity available (i.e., all requests for next-day service are met, and capacity to provide additional trips remains). If, after constant monitoring, it finds next-day requestors are being denied trips, the operator must either increase its passenger carrying capacity or reduce the number of subscription trips. Note that subscription service is discretionary and is not mandated by Section 37.133. Whether to provide subscription service*

¹ https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/docs/Final_FTA_ADA_Circular_C_4710.1.pdf : Section 9.12.2

beyond the 50% ceiling, or whether to provide subscription service at all, is entirely within the transit agency's discretion.”²

Negotiation Times - Negotiating trip pick-times is an area of transit operations that many demand-response agencies struggle to manage. It was established in ADA Paratransit service models to aid in matching demand with supply, moving rider trip requests from high-demand times to times when there is available vehicle capacity that can better serve that trip. Specifically, FTA ADA Circular states, “*A true negotiation consider the rider’s constraints. While some trips have inherent flexibility (e.g., shopping, or recreation), other trips have constraints with respect to when they can begin (e.g., not before the end of the individual’s workday or not until after an appointment is over).*”¹ The Client Representative can lead agencies to ensure customer service representatives are doing this when appropriate.

Fare Uniformity - Fare consistency is one of the most visible aspects of a “seamless” system. It (a) eliminates rider confusion, (b) simplifies payment systems and future integration, and (c) supports transfers across agencies without friction. Specific fare uniformity recommendations can be found in the Strategy Detail section RideCo integrates with point-of-sales system and is implemented with all Ventura County transit agencies, with the exception of Valley Express (who is working towards implementation). This recommendation is consistent with the regional fare structure strategy detailed in the SRTP, which holds that the slight price variations among providers in Ventura County provide no clear benefit to the various agencies nor meaningfully affect affordability for riders, either.

Regional Service Model Evaluation

Over the years, one seat paratransit rides have been requested by the community and has been a strategy recommended by both the Coordinated Plan and the TIES. A countywide, regional DAR model that provides one seat rides across the county for paratransit passengers does not have to require a single agency (or all agencies) to assume responsibility for disproportionately long or higher-cost trips. There is a range of service models to allocate trips, ensuring that service is optimized across jurisdictions while maintaining cost-effectiveness and operational balance.

The chart below describes three main service models and their associated costs, which can fulfill regional service requests without local integration.

² <https://www.transit.dot.gov/does-americans-disabilities-act-ada-limit-subscription-trips-50-available-paratransit-trips>

Chart 2: Regional Trip Service Models

	Regional Trip Brokerage \$	Regional Overlay Service* \$\$	Lead Agency Contracted Fleet \$\$\$
How it Works	Central entity receives all regional trip requests and assigns them to the most appropriate provider	Separate countywide service operates alongside local DAR services	One agency manages a regional service, often with dedicated fleet
Roles of Providers	Handle regional / long-distance / cross-boundary trips	Operate a dedicated regional (private operator) service across jurisdictions	Operate vehicles and drivers for regional trips under contract
Best Use Case	Multi-agency regions with frequent intercity travel	Areas needing a simple regional layer without restructuring local service	Regions wanting stronger control and branding
Advantages	Seamless customer experience; efficient trip allocation; reduces transfers	Easy to implement; clear structure; consistent regional trips	High consistency; centralized oversight; strong branding
Potential Tradeoffs	Requires strong coordination and governance	Possible duplication of resources if not integrated	More complex procurement and management
Comparative Cost	Leverages existing agencies' fleet and drivers	Adds a new layer of service for regional service	Central entity operates/ contracts a regional fleet
Example Agency	Metropolitan Transportation Authority Access-A-Ride (trips are scheduled to the most appropriate jurisdiction)	Houston METROLift Contracts with UZURV and RideCo to deliver ADA-rides for the Greater Houston area	Sacramento Regional Transit SmaRT Flex (dedicated fleet for eligible recipients for nine different zones throughout Sacramento area)

***About Regional Service Overlay/Private On-Demand Transportation Providers**

Private on-demand transportation providers, including Transportation Network Companies, like Uber and Lyft, as well as other private on-demand firms, can take on operational risks and service models that local public transit agencies find difficult or undesirable to manage directly. Two examples include:

Onward - Onward provides assisted, "door-through-door" rideshare services for seniors and individuals with mobility or cognitive impairments and offering companionship. Onward focuses on specialized, high-touch transportation designed for healthcare appointments, groceries, and personal errands. Specific functions include:

- Door-Through-Door Service: Drivers provide physical support from the rider's home to the destination and back.
- Companion Drivers: Drivers are trained to assist with mobility or cognitive limitations.
- Caregiver Support: Their platform offers tools for caregivers to manage transportation and rider preferences.
- Scheduling: Provides scheduled, recurring transportation rather than on-demand only.

UZURV - is an Adaptive Transportation Network Company that provides specialized, pre-scheduled, and on-demand door-to-door rides, focusing on seniors, people with disabilities, and healthcare patients. It partners with transit agencies and provides vetted drivers for paratransit services.

- Accessible Transportation: Offers wheelchair-accessible vehicles to meet specific mobility needs.
- Pre-Scheduled Rides: Specializes in booking, paying for, and scheduling rides in advance via mobile app or phone.
- Partnerships: Works with transit agencies and healthcare providers to offer transport services.

Cost Allocation Model

Depending on what service model is agreed upon, a cost allocation model will need to follow. This is an important part of planning regional trips, and it is important for jurisdictions to understand what it will cost them to serve rides under an integrated model. Cost allocation models must (a) fairly distribute costs among jurisdictions, (b) reflect actual service usage, and (c) ensure transparency and sustainability in ongoing operations and budgeting. A strong cost allocation plan typically combines operational data, financial data, and performance goals.

Chart 3: Regional Trip Cost Allocation Models

Service Model	Cost Model	Cost Details	Explanation	Example
Regional Trip Brokerage	Trip-Based Cost Allocation	Cost = fully allocated cost per trip x number of regional trips provided	Pay for what is delivered, easy to track, transparent	GCTD manages all regional ride deployment. All agencies pay a fixed rate to GCTD for regional rides originating from their area.
	Passenger Time/Mile Allocation	Adds weight for long distance/high-cost rural trips	Prevents agencies with long trips from being undercompensated, addresses equity	GCTD manages all regional ride deployment. All agencies pay a base rate + mileage rate for rides originating from their area.
Regional Overlay Service	Regional Pool Funding	All agencies contribute to a shared regional service budget	Overlay is a shared regional asset. Allocations based on population and ridership	UZURV manages all regional ride deployment. All agencies contribute x funds per year for regional rides.
	Zone-Based Cost Sharing	Costs allocated by service hours or miles	Reflects geographic usage of overlay service	UZURV manages all regional ride deployment. UZURV divides service area into zones, agencies pay based on service hours used within their zone.
	Per-Trip Subsidy Contribution	Agencies pay a set subsidy per trip origination in their area	Pay for what is delivered, transparent	UZURV manages all regional ride deployment. Each agency pays a flat subsidy for every trip that starts in their area.
Lead Agency/ Contracted Fleet	Fully allocated cost recovery	Lead agency calculates cost per hour, mile, trip	Predictable budgeting, easy to administer contractually	GCTD leads all regional services w/dedicated fleet and team. Charges agencies a flat rate per revenue hour for rides originated in their area.
	Minimum Guarantee + Variable Cost	Agencies pay a base contribution plus variable cost per trip	Covers fixed costs and reflects actual usage	GCTD leads all regional services w/dedicated fleet and team. Each agency pays annual fee to administer program \$X per trip.

Contract Enforcement and Centralized Reporting

To move towards a more regional DAR system while maintaining local control, the most effective approach is to start with targeted, low-risk joint activities and actions that create consistency.

The most practical, low-hanging fruit opportunities include the following:

Function	Responsible Party
Branding RideCo regional mobile app/point of sale system	VCTC
Customization: Opening up RideCo on the back-end to measure regional performance metrics	VCTC
Integrated call center technology	All local transit providers
Develop centralized NTD reporting for regional rides	VCTC
Customer Service Training Programs	All local transit providers
Countywide Travel Training Program	All local transit providers
Future Regional Ride Service Model	VCTC, All local transit providers
Future DAR vehicle procurement	VCTC, reimbursement by local transit providers

Role of TRANSCOM

TRANSCOM (Transit Operators Advisory Committee) serves as Ventura County's primary advisory forum for coordination among transit operators and local agencies. The committee provides a venue to collaborate on regional transit planning and develop recommendations related to funding, service delivery, and system improvements. In support of VCTC's mission to enhance regional mobility, TRANSCOM undertakes technical and advisory responsibilities, drawing on representatives from multiple transit and governmental organizations. The committee meets monthly.

While TRANSCOM brings together a regional perspective, there is an opportunity to strengthen its impact by focusing on more tangible, action-oriented outcomes, particularly in the area of regional customer service improvements. The recommended Client Representative should take a more active leadership role in facilitating TRANSCOM meetings in the near term. This would include guiding discussions and advancing initiatives such as the implementation of the principles listed above, regional branding, and service delivery models, with the goal of translating coordination into measurable improvements for riders.

Developing a Memorandum of Understanding

VCTC and the nine demand-response programs should enter into one Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), outlining the responsibilities of each party regarding improving customer

service and implementing the strategies listed above. A sample MOU can be found in the Strategy Detail section.

Summary

Improved customer service and a Ventura County regional DAR one seat pilot program should evaluate the service models, cost allocation approaches, and customer service improvements listed in this plan, because each one directly affects the system’s feasibility, agency buy-in, and rider experience.

First, selecting an appropriate service model (such as trip brokerage, overlay service, or a lead agency approach) defines *how* regional trips will actually be delivered. Different models offer varying levels of coordination, operational complexity, and scalability. By piloting a defined model, agencies can test how well regional trips can be accommodated without fully restructuring existing services. This reduces risk while providing real-world data on demand, travel patterns, and operational impacts.

Second, establishing a clear and equitable cost allocation model is critical for maintaining trust among participating agencies. Regional DAR service often introduces longer and more expensive trips that cross jurisdictional boundaries, raising concerns about who pays for what. A well-defined cost framework—whether based on trips, service hours, or shared regional funding—ensures transparency and fairness. This, in turn, makes agencies more willing to participate in a pilot and supports long-term sustainability if the program expands.

Finally, focusing on customer service improvements—such as a single phone number, coordinated branding, consistent policies, and potentially a shared app—helps demonstrate immediate value to riders. Even if backend systems remain decentralized, a more seamless and unified customer experience can significantly reduce confusion and improve accessibility. This is especially important in a pilot phase, where visible benefits help build public support and political momentum.

STRATEGY DETAIL

Hiring a Client Representative

VCTC should contract a Client Representative to assist with both customer service improvements and adding a piloted regional countywide DAR program. The client representative will act as (a) a neutral party,

- the primary liaison between VCTC and its transit providers, and (3) ensure the goals of improved customer service are met.

Responsible Party: Ventura County Transportation Commission

Length of Contract: 2 years

Best practices for VCTC and the Client Rep to follow:

- Define role clearly
- Structure contract for phased deliverables
- Support role with guidance and direction from lead agency (VCTC)
- Include stakeholder engagement responsibilities
- Require coordination with current legal teams
- Require performance tracking
- Allow for scope adjustments
- Encourage and support each jurisdiction's strengths
- Address each jurisdiction's weaknesses

When: Assuming VCTC Commission and its transit jurisdictions agree to the Customer Experience Plan and Demand Response Integration Plan, VCTC staff should then contract with a Client Representative to move forward initiatives laid out in this Plan.

How: This is envisioned as a contracted position and not as a VCTC employee. Appendix A provides an example of a Job Description for this position. An initial workplan will need to be prepared by the Client Rep after the position commences, annually updating the workplan over the envisioned two-year timeframe.

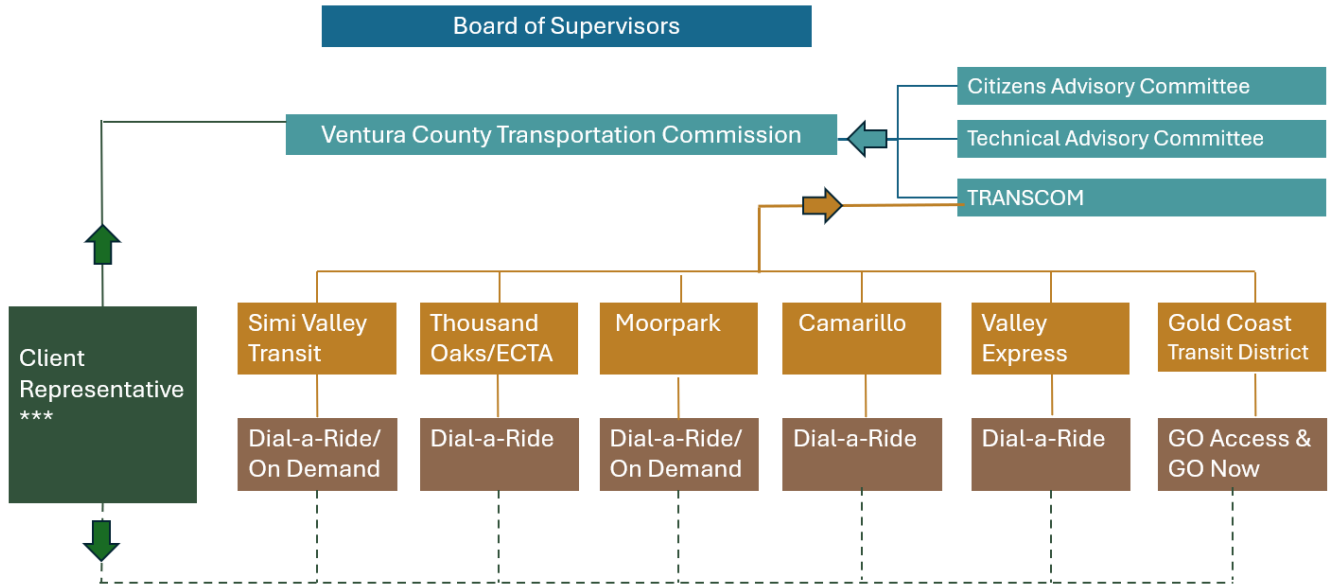
Cost: \$150,000 to \$175,000 annually, inclusive of a small direct expense budget, largely for local travel and envisioned as a time-limited contract of two years.

Cost Sharing/ Cost Responsibility: VCTC is responsible for funding the Client Representative. The jurisdictions will share the benefits of that oversight and leadership role (similar to how VCTC rolled out RideCo for countywide use).

Initial Table of Organization: Once the Client Representative is hired, the position will report to

VCTC on a contractual basis and maintain established partnerships and communication channels across the County. The figure below illustrates the organizational structure envisioned for reporting purposes. This structure evolves as the Client Representative and participating agencies determine the future of DAR services.

Coordination Organization Chart



*** Client Representative will coordinate Dispatchers, Supervisors, Drivers and Call Takers for all DAR Services

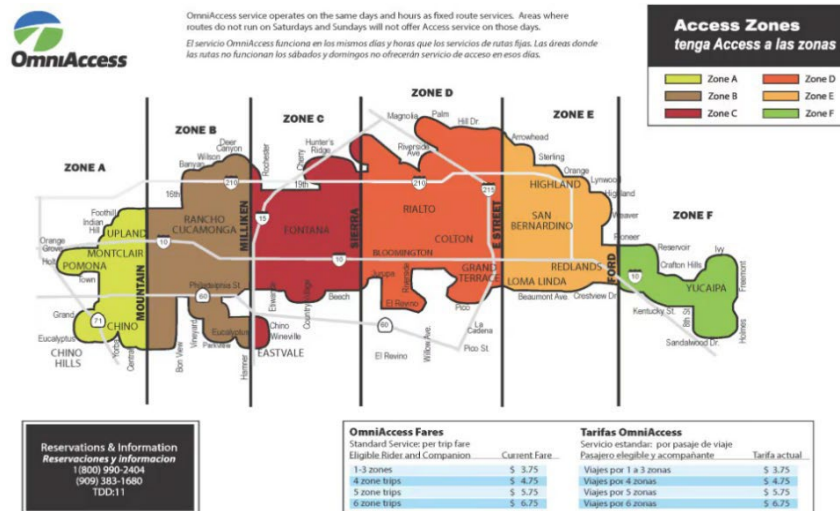
are Policy and Allocation Model

There are a variety of fare policies and allocation modes that a countywide dial-a-ride program can take. The fares should follow what is set forth in the SRTP and can be further determined in the policy setting effort recommended by this Plan.

What other cross-jurisdictional agencies are doing

Riverside Transit Agency (RTA), based in Riverside, California, operates in a region that is comparable to Ventura County in terms of geography, population density, traffic congestion, and vehicle wear and tear. RTA provides DAR services across a broad area of Western Riverside County, serving multiple cities and navigating high-traffic corridors. To determine fares, RTA uses a zone-based system with a base fare of \$3.50. Riders are charged an additional fee for each zone traveled, up to a maximum fare of \$10.50 per one-way trip.²

OmniAccess, the DAR service provided by Omnitrans in San Bernardino County, also has a similar operation to RTA, traversing multiple jurisdictions in a populated area of southern California. The image shows an example of the zones they travel through, as well as the associated fares by zones.³



² <https://www.riversidetransit.com/index.php/dial-a-ride/what-is-dial-a-ride>

³ <https://omnitrans.org/services/access-ada/>

There are two models for fare allocation, one based on mileage, and one based on zones.

Mileage-Based Fare Allocation

Mileage-based allocation assigns fares proportionally to the miles traveled on each trip. Ventura County is roughly 40 miles across, below is a sample of what a mileage-based fare cost allocation can look like for a DAR user. The base fare for anyone leaving their home would be \$4.00 with a \$5.00 increase for every 10 miles traveled.

Base Fare	1-10 Miles	11-20 Miles	21-30 Miles	31-40 Miles	Total Maximum One-Way Trip
\$4.00	\$5.00	\$10.00	\$15.00	\$20.00	\$24.00

Advantages of Mileage Cost Fare Allocation

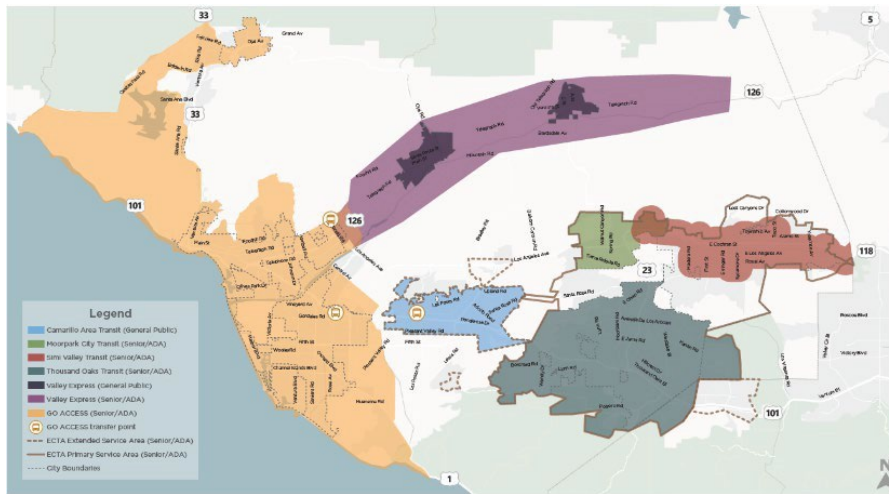
- Riders pay for what they use.
- Longer trips use more resources (driver time, fuel, vehicle hours), so pricing by distance feels fair to both riders and the agency.
- Helps prevent subsidizing long trips disproportionately compared to short, local trips.
- Mileage often correlates with operating costs (fuel, labor hours, maintenance), especially in suburban counties.
- Works well in counties with large geographic spread, multiple cities, and rural edges.

Concerns of Mileage Cost Fare Allocation

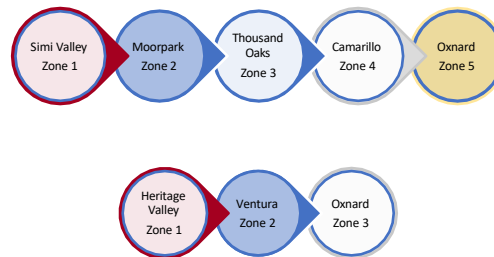
- Harder to explain: Riders may not know how far their trip is in miles, leading to confusion about fare costs. Compared to flat fares, mileage-based pricing requires more explanation and communication.
- Requires accurate geocoding and distance calculations for every trip.
- Potential equity concerns in rural areas. Riders in rural or underserved areas may have to travel farther for basic services, meaning they pay more — despite having fewer local options.

Zone-based Cost Fare Calculation

A zone-based fare allocation for DAR services is a system that divides the service area by logical groupings (in this case, primarily the cities and nearby unincorporated developments) and bases cost-sharing on the number of zones a trip crosses. The Ventura County DAR service map below shows color-coded areas that could be the basis for a DAR fare zone, and each zone would be a designated price.



Examples of Dial-a-Ride Zones



Advantages of Zone-Based Cost Fare Allocation

- Easier for riders to understand. Riders can be shown a zone map to estimate fare, and clear visual boundaries make it easier to explain than per-mile pricing.
- Scalable for large geographic areas.
- Predictable and transparent - Fares and cost shares can be pre-calculated by zone pairing.
- Accountants/funders can plan around fixed fare bands (e.g., Zone 1 to Zone 3 always costs \$X).
- Simplifies jurisdictional cost-sharing - When allocating operating costs across cities or subregions, zone boundaries make it easier to apportion based on trip origins/destinations.

Concerns of Zone-Based Fare Allocation

- Zone boundaries can feel arbitrary to riders if they don't match real travel patterns.
- Trips near zone borders can seem unfairly priced.
- May not reflect actual mileage or service cost variations as precisely as distance-based models.

Transit agencies in the State of California are required, pursuant to the Transportation Development Act (TDA), to meet minimum farebox recovery ratios of 20 percent in urbanized areas and 10 percent in rural areas.

If a regional mobility pilot program were implemented, the farebox recovery requirement would be waived for two full fiscal years, in addition to the remainder of the fiscal year in which the pilot is initiated.

According to the Technical Report, the average cost to operate on-demand service in Ventura County is approximately \$10.40 per mile. Assuming an average one-way trip length of six miles, roughly double that of a typical local dial-a-ride trip, the fully allocated cost of a regional trip is estimated at \$62.40.

This paper recommends that jurisdictions receiving TDA funding evaluate the feasibility of allocating a greater share of those funds toward regional rides.

Additionally, this paper recommends that Ventura County pursue funding through the Access for All Program to partially subsidize regional fares and help mitigate farebox recovery constraints.

Continue to work with RideCo to optimize regional trip making to encourage more riders per trip, which would increase the fare revenue to cover the cost of the trip.

Uniform Branding

The National Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) Branding Toolkit (with a rural/demand response focus) discusses that branding is the foundation of customer understanding and awareness. ⁴ Their guidance emphasizes that all public-facing information should be clear, accessible, and easy to understand, ensuring that riders of varying abilities, languages, and backgrounds can use the service. Transit agencies are required to provide meaningful access to information for individuals with limited English proficiency and to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities through tools such as translated materials, large print, audio formats, and accessible digital content. Using plain language is strongly encouraged.

In addition, communication is especially important during service changes and emergency situations. Agencies should proactively inform the public and stakeholders through outreach methods such as surveys, meetings, and direct notifications.

Naming Conventions/Logos

To the right is a sample concept of what the naming and a logo could look like for regional trips. The colors consider the colors from all the various Ventura County providers. The imagery considers the water, mountain and sun in Ventura County, and the language conveys a simple message – that one seat rides are now available to travel across the County.

⁴ <http://cloud.nationalrtap.org/Toolkits/Marketing-Toolkit/How-To-Guide-for-Marketing-Transit/Strategies-for-Marketing-Public-Transit/Fundamental-Communications>



Memorandum of Understanding Example

Purpose

This MOU establishes a cooperative framework among Ventura County transit agencies (“Parties”) to coordinate the provision of a regional dial-a-ride (DAR) service. The intent is to improve cross-jurisdictional mobility, enhance customer experience, and increase operational efficiency while preserving each Party’s independent governance, operational control, and service delivery structure.

Principles

This MOU’s principles are explained in detail in the larger conceptual report.

Scope

The Parties agree to collaborate in the following areas:

- Regional trip coordination and/or a service model agreed upon by all parties
- Shared customer-facing tools (one call number/one mobile app)
- Standardized rider policies
- Data sharing and reporting
- Branding and customer communication
- Each Party retains responsibility for its own fleet, personnel, contractor management, and daily operations.

Roles and Responsibilities

Lead Agency

VCTC, in conjunction with its contracted Client Representative, will be the designated Lead Agency and shall: facilitate coordination meetings, oversee implementation of shared technologies, administer any jointly procured contracts if feasible, develop regional performance metrics and reporting templates, and act as a central point of contact for regional service issues.

Participating Agencies

Each participating agency shall:

- Continue to operate and manage its local DAR service, including drivers, vehicles, and dispatch
- Provide service within its jurisdiction and, where agreed, fulfill regional trips
- Accept and perform inter-agency trips based on mutually agreed protocols
- Participate in a shared call center system or coordinated call routing
- Provide consistent rider information aligned with regional standards
- Work toward consistency in:

- No-show/late cancellation policies
- Fare structures
- Service hours and booking windows
- Provide agreed-upon operational and performance data
- Participate in regional reporting and evaluation efforts

Joint Responsibilities

The Parties collectively agree to:

- Develop and maintain regional service standards
- Establish trip allocation protocols, including:
 - Which agency serves which trips
 - Cost allocation methodology (e.g., per trip, per mile, negotiated rates)
- Coordinate service planning and adjustments
- Participate in joint procurement opportunities, such as:
- Implement a regional branding strategy

Cost Sharing and Financial Arrangements - Each Party shall remain financially responsible for its own operations. The costs associated with regional trips shall be reimbursed based on a mutually agreed formula. The future shared system costs (e.g., software, call center) may be split proportionally (e.g., by population, ridership, or usage) or funded through grants or external sources.

Governance Structure - The existing TRANSCOM Committee and Client Representative will oversee implementation and policy alignment, the review of performance metrics, and resolve any operational issues.

Term and Termination - This MOU shall remain in effect for five years.

Client Representative Contract Job Description Example

Reports To: VCTC

Classification: Full-Time, Exempt / Contract

Salary Range: \$125k - \$175k

Position Summary

The Client Representative is responsible for overseeing and coordinating the planning, implementation, and operational alignment of regional on-demand rides across multiple jurisdictions, providers, and platforms, specifically; with the cities of Simi Valley, Camarillo, Moorpark, Thousand Oaks; as well as the Valley Express and Gold Coast regions. This position serves as the program's lead liaison with service contractors, RideCo (scheduling software), local jurisdictions, and regional partners to ensure ADA compliance, service quality, and policy consistency.

Key Responsibilities

Strategic Planning & Integration

- Develop service model for regional trip making
- Align eligibility criteria, fare policies, scheduling parameters, and service areas

Contract & Vendor Oversight

- Monitor performance of selected service model
- Coordinate with RideCo, dispatch, and call centers to ensure interoperability

Policy & Compliance

- Ensure adherence to ADA (49 CFR Part 37), Title VI, and FTA compliance requirements
- Standardized policies on no-shows, advance reservations, cancellations, and service delivery

Stakeholder Engagement

- Facilitate TRANSCOM meetings related to regional trip making with participating agencies and stakeholders
- Lead outreach to community organizations, riders with disabilities, and local jurisdictions
- Serve as the central point of contact for cross-agency issues or service escalation

Reporting & Funding Support

- Compile operational data and produce regular performance and compliance reports
- Assist with preparing documentation for grant applications and reporting (e.g., 5310, LCTOP)
- Identify opportunities for funding coordination and cost-sharing across services

Qualifications

Minimum Requirements:

- Bachelor's degree in public administration, transportation planning, business, or related field
- 5+ years of experience in public transit, mobility management, or contract oversight
- Strong understanding of ADA paratransit regulations and demand-response operations

Desired Skills:

- Experience with transit scheduling/dispatch software (e.g., Via, RideCo, Trapeze, Ecolane)
- Knowledge of FTA funding sources and reporting requirements
- Strong interpersonal and negotiation skills for managing contracts and interagency relations
- Ability to manage multiple projects and stakeholders simultaneously

Work Environment

This position may involve a hybrid of office, remote, and field work. Occasional travel to partner jurisdictions, public meetings, and contractor sites is required.