

July 8, 2020

Ms. Sandy Hart
Chair, Lake County Board
18 N. County Street
Waukegan, IL 60085

Subject: Paratransit Lead Agency Working Group – Lead Agency Recommendation

Dear Chair Hart and Members of the Lake County Board:

As you know the expansion of mobility options and increased efficiency through coordination of paratransit services has been a topic of interest and discussion in Lake County. The COVID-19 pandemic has put a spotlight on just how essential paratransit service is in Lake County. While traditional fixed route transit service in our region has seen ridership drops from 70% to 97%, paratransit trips in Lake County are only down 50%. The residents who utilize these services do not have other options and rely on them for essential travel for work and medical care.

In April 2019, the Lake County Division of Transportation (LCDOT) completed the *Paratransit Market Study for the Lake County Region*. Paratransit is defined in the study as a shared and flexible on-demand service that responds to rider requests for travel within a defined service area geared toward individuals with mobility limitations that prevent them from accessing scheduled bus service, and/or live outside of an area served by scheduled bus service. While the study recommended a variety of governance, service and mobility management improvements, the number one priority was to form a working group whose mission was to identify a lead agency to advance paratransit coordination and service improvements.

At your direction, the Lead Agency Working Group was created as an ad hoc committee of the County Board to follow through on that priority recommendation. Since the initial meeting on July 30th, 2019, the Lead Agency Working Group has met six times to discuss the current state of paratransit services in Lake County, including identifying the challenges, alternatives, and potential lead agencies. The committee has seen presentations from various transportation agencies in the region, including the Transportation Management Association of Lake-Cook, Pace, Ride in Kane Program, Ride DuPage, and MC Ride Dial-A-Ride.

As a result of the discussions, presentations, and knowledge gained on paratransit at these meetings, the Lead Agency Working Group Committee has brought forth recommendation of new structure to strive towards a Countywide Paratransit Service model. The overarching goal of this new structure is to simultaneously improve both the administration of the service and improve the experience for the users of the service by providing efficient, reliable and affordable transportation options to our residents. The Lead Agency Working Group Committee feels that Lake County Government's leadership, experience and regional reach are essential to achieve a true countywide, coordinated paratransit system. Therefore, the Lead Agency Working Group Committee recommends that Lake County Government serve as Executive Sponsor in this new countywide service model and a new Ride Lake County Committee, made up of local funding sponsors and service providers be created to replace Lake County Coordinated Transportation Services Committee (LCCTSC).

As Executive Sponsor, Lake County Government's role in establishing a Countywide Paratransit Service model includes the following:

Transition Period to Countywide Program (2020-2022):

- Continue support of LCCTSC during transition to new Ride Lake County program.
- Continue support of Ride Lake County West and Ride Lake County Central programs during transition period to new Ride Lake County program.
- Work with Pace and local partners to determine the administrative and funding model best suited for the Ride Lake County program.
- Coordinate recruitment of local sponsors via Letters of Intent and/or Inter-governmental Agreements
- Dissolve LCCTSC and form new Ride Lake County Committee made up of local funding sponsors and service providers.
- Partner in the development of the Ride Lake County program governance and by-laws.
- Identify Lake County Government sponsored services; examples are funding regional trips, trips to Lake County Courthouse, trips to Lake County Health Department, etc.
- Establish Executive Committee of Lake County Departments to oversee Lake County Government service(s).

Countywide Program Begins (target 2023):

- Manage Pace agreement for Lake County Government sponsored services.
- Support the Ride Lake County program as a member and sponsor.
- Continue to assist in identifying and recruiting new local sponsors.
- Serve as a liaison between Ride Lake County and regional agencies like the RTA and CMAP.

While serving as Executive Sponsor, the Lead Agency Working Group envisions Lake County Government being heavily involved in the process of establishing the countywide Ride Lake County program and gradually becoming less involved in the ongoing administration, giving participating parties more responsibility when the transition to the new service is completed. We thank you for your leadership in forming the Lead Agency Working Group and look forward to working with you in the transition to a new county-wide service model.

Sincerely,

Linda Soto

Linda Soto
Chair, Lead Agency Working Group
Pace Board of Directors for Lake County

Kathleen O'Connor

Kathleen O'Connor
Vice-Chair, Lead Agency Working Group
Libertyville Township Supervisor

CC: Gary Gibson, County Administrator
Shane Schneider, Director of Transportation/County Engineer