Shared Ride Advisory Committee (SRAC) — Meeting #2 Highlights

Overview

The Shared Ride Advisory Committee (SRAC) held its second meeting on Wednesday, July 22, 2026. The Committee is charged with developing a sustainable funding and service delivery model for Pennsylvania's Shared Ride Program within existing funding levels. During the meeting, members reviewed PennDOT/customer perspectives, recent program innovations, and alternative funding and service delivery concepts that informed five potential program models. Committee members were asked to evaluate these models before the next meeting to identify the elements they believe should be included in the Committee's recommended model for legislative consideration.

PennDOT & Customer Perspectives

The Shared Ride Program was originally designed to be self-sustaining, but it has experienced a widening gap between revenues and expenses, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The funding gap in 2024 was $72 million. Key drivers of this gap include:

- **Ridership Decline:** The pandemic caused a sharp, sudden drop in ridership and revenue that has not fully recovered.
- **Workforce Challenges:** Rising wages in the private sector have made it difficult for operators to keep wages competitive and attract and maintain vehicle operators.
- **Rising Costs:** Between 2019 and 2024, the average cost per hour across Pennsylvania to operate shared ride rose by $27 to $80 per hour, with labor, fuel, and insurance costs noted as major contributors.

Feedback from **customer satisfaction surveys (CSS)** showed riders remain highly satisfied overall but continue to identify long wait times, lengthy rides, advance reservation requirements, limited weekend service, and slow customer service as key concerns. Outreach from **"Aging Our Way, PA"** highlighted transportation challenges in rural areas, difficulty accessing vehicles or transit stops, and the high cost of transportation network companies (TNCs).

Pilots and Innovations

Recent pilot programs and innovations in shared ride have included:

- **Same Day Service Pilot:** The added flexibility increased customer satisfaction without overwhelming operators with unsustainable demand. Adding this service option would not lead to operating savings.
- **Geisinger Health Plan Pilot:** Mobility coordination through rabbittransit that helps Geisinger patients find transportation solutions (not just shared-ride service) for medical appointments and essential needs. The program has led to better patient outcomes and reduced medical costs.
- **Find My Ride Apply and Schedule:** Statewide web-based tools that register and direct riders to their optimal public transportation solution, reducing the workload for transit agency customer service staff.
- **Service Management Consolidations:** Some transit agencies have been merged or created contract arrangements to enhance management and reduce costs by eliminating some administrative redundancies.

Alternative Funding and Service Delivery Concepts

Alternative funding concepts were developed in a prior shared ride study and can serve as ideas for a future shared ride program model. These include:

- **Per Trip Reimbursement (Current):** Maintains the status quo with a per-trip 15% rider co-pay and 85% fare subsidy reimbursement. The rider co-payment could be lowered or capped to encourage more ridership; however, the per-trip subsidy would need to increase to offset the reduction.
- **Formula-Based:** Providers would receive monthly formula payments based on service statistics or service area demographics, which could cover costs, and then collect a per-trip rider fare payment.
- **Hybrid Per-Trip and Formula-Based:** Providers would receive a monthly formula payment that could cover fixed costs, while variable costs would still be covered by per-trip reimbursements.

Service delivery concepts were developed to serve as examples of how service can be modified to increase ridership or reduce costs in committee-developed shared ride program models. Concepts included:

- Establishing a **statewide core service** that PennDOT funds, and any extra service outside of the core is determined and funded locally.
- A **managed mobility service** where riders are directed to the most efficient service mode that meets their needs.
- Creating a **passenger mobility benefit** where funding is directed to individual riders who use their allotted amounts on the mode they see most fit.
- Establishing a **uniform fare policy** for out-of-pocket costs statewide.

Shared Ride Program Alternative Models

Sample program models were prepared for the Committee members to review and provide feedback. The five models build progressively on one another and include:

- **Model 1 – Strengthening Today's Shared Ride Program:** Keeps the current funding structure and focuses on optimizing the service by implementing improvements to cut costs or improve operating efficiency.
- **Model 2 – Predictable Operating Funding Model:** Moves to stable formula-based funding and requires providers to operate within a set budget, akin to fixed-route.
- **Model 3 – Strategic Investment Model:** Builds upon the formula-based funding and offers discretionary state investment in improvements aimed at improving efficiency and reducing costs.
- **Model 4 – Regional Mobility Coordination Model:** Emphasis is placed on connecting customers with the most efficient transportation solution that meets their needs through the Regional Mobility Coordination Function (RMCF).
- **Model 5 – Human Service Mobility Network:** Expands the RMCF to include human service agencies, healthcare organizations, sponsoring agencies, local governments, etc., acting as a single mobility network.

Discussion Topics

During the meeting, questions or comments formed the basis of discussions, which included:

- **The revenue and expense gap is addressed differently by each agency.** Committee members requested examples of how different providers have accounted for their programs' funding shortfalls.
- **Counties and transit agencies are not required to provide shared ride service.** Shared ride service is currently available in all counties of Pennsylvania, but it is not mandated.
- **Develop an additional program alternative model that shows what could be done with increased funding levels.** Some Committee members believe it would be beneficial to present an additional program scenario that shows the benefits that could be realized if the program were to receive increased funding.
- **Pennsylvania's Shared Ride Program is unique across the nation.** Committee members requested comparisons with other state programs similar to the Pennsylvania Shared Ride Program.

Committee Member Actions Items

- Read the Shared Ride Program Alternatives Workbook.
- Complete the accompanying questionnaire and return it to Committee staff.
- Schedule a one-on-one meeting with Committee staff to discuss alternative model feedback if desired.