
Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Transit Administration (MDOT MTA)

MobilityLink ADA Paratransit Service

FY2018 Access and Mobility Partnership Grant: Human Services Coordination Research (HSCR) Grant Program

FINAL REPORT September 2024

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Executive Summary

The Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility (ICAM), FY2018 Access and Mobility Partnership Grant: Human Services Coordination Research (HSCR) Grant Program funds were authorized under Section 3006(b) of the FAST Act and awarded to the Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Transit Administration (MDOT MTA) in FY 2019 to address gaps in services by incorporating itinerary planning technology and enhancing coordination between agencies to provide more options for paratransit riders, including fixed route and taxi-access alternatives.

Although the project's overall goal stayed the same over time (implementation and monitoring of FRE), the objectives and performance outcomes had to be revised at the delayed start of the performance period in FY2024, as many of the original objectives were found to be impractical. Both the original and revised objectives are listed below:

Original Objectives:

Activity Objective	Numerical Target
A: Offer alternative rides, including fixed-route options, to MobilityLink customers	5% of MobilityLink customers per day
B: Reduce overall wait time for the Reservation Call Center. Average wait time prior to the grant was 2 minutes 49 seconds.	5% reduction in overall wait time, or an average wait time of 2 minutes 40 seconds.
C: Develop and implement conditional eligibility through the first year of Trapeze PASS-IPA (Itinerary Planning Assistant)	5% improvement in enforcement of conditional eligibility
D: Reduce booking errors by the Reservation Call Center	10% reduction in booking errors
E: Implementation of Software	100%

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Outcome
Improve customer satisfaction with the MobilityLink booking process by 5%. On average, Customer Care receives approximately 700 complaints each month. The goal would be to reduce customer complaints to approximately 665 or fewer complaints each month.

Revised Objectives:

Major Activities Output Measures

	Performance Measure	Target
1	Implementation of Trapeze Software Itinerary Planning Assistant (IPA) module	100%
2	Fixed-Route Equivalency (FRE) compliance monitoring	100%
3	ADA paratransit trips meeting or exceeding FRE	85%

Outcome Measure

Outcome
A. Paratransit Fixed-Route Equivalency overall compliance

Introduction / Background

The Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Transit Administration (MDOT MTA) is one of the largest multi-modal transit systems in the United States. MDOT MTA operates local buses (CityLink and LocalLink), Commuter Bus Service, Light RailLink, Metro SubwayLink, Maryland Area Regional Commuter (MARC) Train Service, and the complementary ADA paratransit MobilityLink service. MDOT MTA also directs funding and statewide assistance

to Locally Operated Transit Systems (LOTS) in each of Maryland's 23 counties, Baltimore City, Annapolis, and Ocean City.

MDOT MTA is committed to providing safe, reliable, courteous, accessible and user-friendly services. This includes accessible bus and rail services as well as door-to-door MobilityLink service for individuals with disabilities who are unable to use the bus and rail service. As required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), MobilityLink provides eligible customers a shared ride, advanced reservation, origin-to-destination service that operates within a ¾ mile corridor on either side of MDOT MTA fixed routes, and, at a minimum, for the days and hours of fixed route operations.

MobilityLink service offers a level of service comparable to MDOT MTA fixed route, better known as "Fixed-Route Equivalency" or "FRE" which refers to a standard that ensures the level of service provided by paratransit systems is comparable to that of fixed-route public transportation services. This means that paratransit services must offer similar service hours, geographic coverage, and response times as regular bus or train routes in the same area. The aim is to make sure that people with disabilities, who rely on paratransit, have access to transit options that are equal in quality to traditional public transportation.

This concept is often tied to requirements set by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which mandates that paratransit services provide an equivalent transportation option for individuals who cannot use fixed-route services due to disability.

This report summarizes the performance of MDOT MTA MobilityLink service's fixed-route equivalency (FRE) of customer travel times for the reporting period of January, February, March, April, May, and June 2024. The focus is on performance measures, outcomes, challenges, and future plans to ensure efficient service delivery.

Project Overview / Description

MobilityLink currently utilizes several software modules from Trapeze Software Group (www.trapezegroup.com) to help manage the MobilityLink day-to-day operations. The main components include: PASS, the core reservations, scheduling and dispatch system; PASS-CERT, for customer certification and eligibility management; PASS-COM, for all customer related complaints/commendations; Viewpoint Novus, for real-time and historical reporting and data reconciliation; Service Infractions, for management and enforcement of customer-facing policies, such as No-Shows and Disruptive Behavior; PASS-IVR (Integrated Voice Recorder), for call center self-service and automated call alerts for riders; PASS-Web and PASS-App (branded as *Mobility All Access*), for mobile and web based trip and customer profile management; and, PASS-MON/Rangers, for both in-vehicle hardware and associated real-time mobile data transfer of critical operational performance information between dispatchers and vehicle operators.

In October of 2021, MDOT MTA MobilityLink implemented the Trapeze Itinerary Planning Analyzer module (IPA), an integrated technology solution which performs a real-time lookup of available itineraries from MTA's fixed-route modes for each MobilityLink customer's ADA trip booking request. The full travel time calculation, which includes walking time from the customer's origin to the bus or rail stop, any expected wait time for transfers, and, the walking time from the last stop to the customer's destination, is then applied as the maximum allowed travel time for the ADA trip booking. This is how MobilityLink measures FRE compliance.

MobilityLink data analysts, in conjunction with MDOT MTA's Office of Performance Management, have developed operational dashboards using Microsoft Power-Business Intelligence (Power-BI) to monitor and measure the department's FRE. The integration of the two technology solutions, allows the

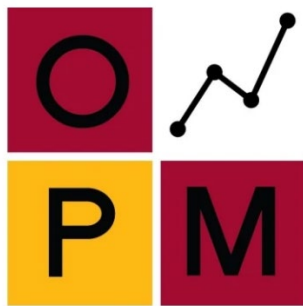
MobilityLink staff to keep a pulse on the day-to-day key performance metrics at their fingertips using most mobile devices. This includes regular FRE monitoring.

Key Partnerships

- Trapeze Group



- MDOT MTA Office Of Performance Management



General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS), which is the industry standard common data platform for public transportation schedules and associated geographic information. The Trapeze IPA module for MobilityLink uses GTFS to obtain comparable fixed-route travel times.

Impacts of COVID 19

- Project implementation delays due to Trapeze project manager changes and MTA IT reorganization of support for MobilityLink
- MTA Mobility management changes
- Radical changes in demand for ADA paratransit service as well as challenges encountered by MobilityLink service delivery providers to hire vehicle operators as demand for services returned
- Reprioritization of state funds. With the response to COVID-19, some projects were delayed or shelved altogether.

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Performance Measures

The reporting period was from January 2024 through June 2024 and the activity objectives were tracked.

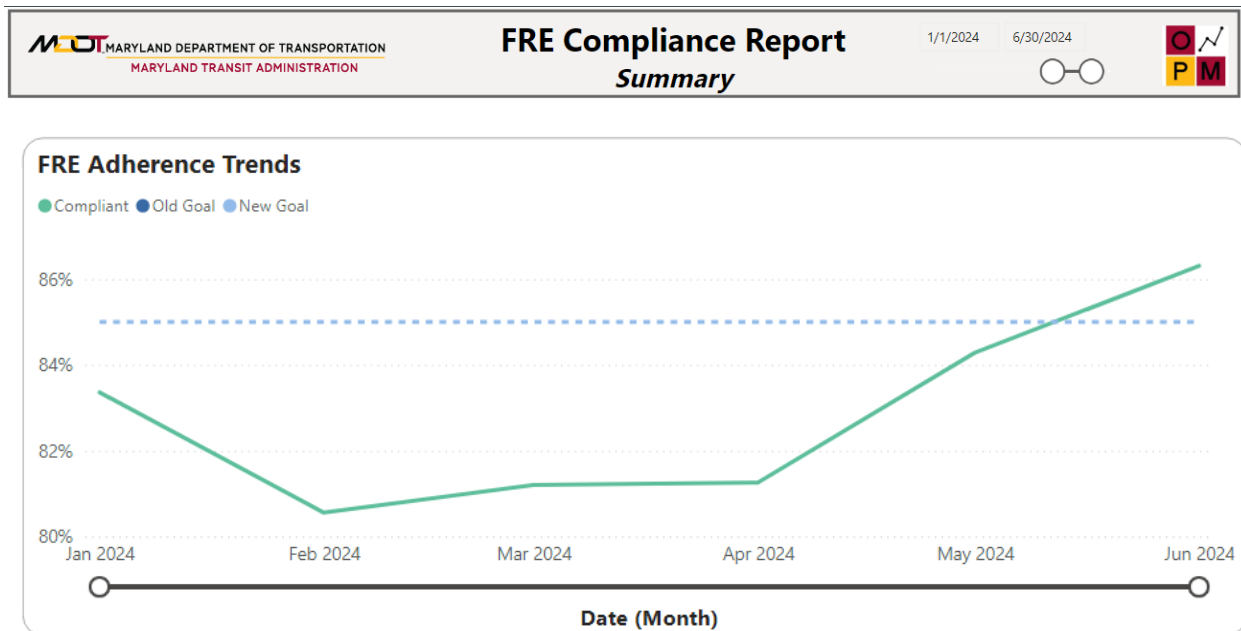
Implementation of Trapeze Software Itinerary Planning Assistant (IPA) module
Fixed-Route Equivalency (FRE) compliance monitoring
ADA paratransit trips meeting or exceeding FRE

During the reporting period, MobilityLink services key performance indicators, particularly on-time performance, fluctuated due to various challenges, including staffing shortages and technical issues. In March 2024, the region experienced a catastrophic impact when a cargo vessel struck the Francis Scott Key bridge. The resulting bridge collapse and inevitable change in behavior has had a lasting impact on the state's local and regional transportation needs. Despite the challenges, through various efforts including the use of supplemental service providers and adjustments to call center staffing to ensure adequate service levels, on-time performance for MobilityLink services began to stabilize in May 2024, and fully stabilized by June 2024.

Outcome

On page 10 *Figure 1*, you will find MobilityLink's overall adherence to FRE during the reporting period.

Figure 1: FRE Adherence Trends



The graphic in figure 1 provided by MTA’s Office of Performance Management, shows there’s a direct correlation between manpower and FRE compliance. February-April 2024, MobilityLink performance operations suffered due to manpower shortages. During these months, we see a decline in FRE compliance dropping to nearly 80%. However, by May 2024, when manpower levels restabilized, FRE began to see a positive trend. This positive trend remained constant through the remainder of the reporting period and exceeded the required goal of 85%.

Moving Forward / Sustainability

While MobilityLink faced challenges, performance improved steadily over time. Continued efforts to strengthen staffing and optimize resources are critical for maintaining service standards moving forward. MobilityLink will continue to closely monitor service trends and make operational adjustments accordingly. MobilityLink shall continue to strengthen partnerships with

Supplemental Service Providers to aide in supporting any gaps in service. MobilityLink also plans to explore new technology options to help improve both the customer and driver experience.

Lessons Learned

Common challenges reported during this period included staffing shortages, technical issues, and infrastructure disruptions (particularly the March bridge collapse). Solutions have involved hiring initiatives, increased collaboration with service providers, seasonal service demand adjustments and technical system health assessments.

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