



## More Mobility, Stronger Connections: Using Transactional Data Specifications Webinar FAQ

To view the webinar recordings click on [Part 1](#) & [Part 2](#)

### 1. What is RideSheet?

RideSheet is a set of specially designed spreadsheets stored in the Google Workspace cloud environment. Together with a set of software scripts that add basic automation and provide access to external data sources such as Google Maps, the spreadsheets become a sort of “mini-app” that can serve the data tracking needs of small transportation services.

### 2. Discuss the RideSheet technology in relation to the Transactional Data Specifications (TDS).

Google Sheets has the capability to both send and receive data through web-based application programming interfaces (APIs) through its Google Apps Script programming tools. This capability allows a Google Sheet to use the TDS for communication between independent RideSheet instances, or between a RideSheet instance and any other system that also implements the TDS.

The Transactional Data Specification is still new and subject to significant changes in the months to come. Because RideSheet is a flexible and lightweight tool, RideSheet is a good candidate for building proofs of concept for larger projects where it would normally not be appropriate.

### 3. What's the importance of RideSheet being an open-source product?

Software developed under an open-source license is not perfect or exempt from the costs that come with using and maintaining technology. The value of open-source licensing for RideSheet is in its ability to be freely updated as needed by agencies or their contractors without reliance on any single vendor. It can be improved in a “stone soup” fashion by a community of developers as its use grows.

### 4. How is data kept secure, private, and safe?

Data security relies on a “shared responsibility” model. The Google Workspace platform is itself highly secure, to the point where Google will sign business associate agreements to comply with HIPAA requirements. The exchange of data between RideSheet instances is encrypted using TLS, the same technology that is used for encryption across the web. Authentication (making sure that only authorized parties can access the APIs) is managed using a different technology, [HMAC](#), but is similar in that it uses encryption to ensure authorized access only.

While these systems address the elements of security over which Google and RideSheet scripts have control, comprehensive security can only be achieved when RideSheet is used in the context of an agency that has appropriate data security policies, procedures, and regular training in place.

**5. Is a demo of how RideSheet works available, even as it is still a work in progress?**

Yes! Contact [ridesheet-info@fullpath.io](mailto:ridesheet-info@fullpath.io)

**6. How do you see RideSheet enhancing the level of service delivery for Lake County and Inner Court Family Center?**

It is already helping to reduce duplication in trips as well as information delivery and storage. In this, it saves time, wages, fuel, and money. This is an easy-to-read format. When the scheduler steps out for lunch, another person can easily answer trip questions about ride availability, etc.

**7. How does Lake County and Inner Court Family Center see RideSheet improving overall operations and business development?**

RideSheet does help lay out our schedules in a chronological order using the manifest. Having this defined clearly assists with understanding capacity more clearly.

Questions asked during the webinar

**8. Is anyone in the US trying something like this?**

Currently, this is in use in Lake County, Oregon.

**9. How do you get public, private and nonprofit groups to come together to move in this direction? We would need to try/pilot this in order to get buy-in.**

Those interested in coordination should check it out. Lake County and Inner Court Family Center got started by talking at local transportation meetings. We confirmed our two entities are serving the same persons. In fact, we drive past the other's offices. Once that became obvious and we recognized that there was plenty of work for both of us, we started talking about working together. It was an easy choice to serve our area and the public better.

**10. What is the optimum size market to try something like this?**

Lake County and Inner Court Family Center has 9 vehicles, 9 drivers and drive approximately 17,000 miles with 300 trips per month.

Maximum size is approximately 10 or fewer vehicles.

**11. How does the project work from the transit provider end? Do the non-profits need to know any code language? I'd love to hear the non-profits' perspective on what the tool 'is'.**

No. Any knowledge of Excel or similar is helpful, but even a novice can muddle through. Spreadsheet knowledge is helpful to create additional lists and extract additional information, but not necessary.

Agencies themselves do not need to know programming code.

**12. How have your drivers adapted to the new technology?**

Change is tricky...about half of our drivers were on board from the start. The other half have joined in. It is very low tech on the driver side if necessary. A driver can access the manifest via a link in their email **OR** have a picture of it texted to their phone **OR** it can be printed, and we can have a hard copy waiting in the office when they arrive for the trip. Our preference is email, but not everyone is there yet.

**13. How many trips do Lake County and the other non-profit provide a year?**

Lake County is at 3,600 trips per year.

**14. Is Ridesheet similar to a GTFS development tool? If yes, how are folks training in how to work with RideSheet?**

RideSheet is a tool designed for daily operations at small transit agencies and does not contain any functionality to produce GTFS feeds.

Ridesheet uses the *transactional data* specification for demand-responsive transportation to interoperate the services of two or more transportation providers. It enables providers to automate tasks associated with ride scheduling in a coordinated way.

The GTFS is a different data specification (data standard) focused on *discovery data*, allowing users to understand travel options available to them.

**15. Is there anything that you are still 'smoothing out' with Ridesheet? Any issues that have popped up that are being resolved in this pilot phase, before going 'prime time'?**

We are anxious to see a single screen calendar for 'at a glance' review. We have purchased a large screen monitor for this purpose. This may be difficult as we grow, the information available is vast. It could be a complicated calendar, but it is still a goal. Occasionally, a solution for the other nonprofit is made and it then makes a tweak to our program that is not necessarily welcome. Those instances have been quickly remedied.

Full Path is continuing to work with Lake County agencies, adding features, and fixing issues as they arise.

**16. Can RideSheet track past driver schedule and how fast they were going?**

No. We have purchased a different product for this.

RideSheet does not connect to or track on-board telematics.

**17. Could RideSheets be modified for Demand Response Transportation (DRT) providers who use flex routes with defined routes but also deviate off the route via scheduling trips?**

While such a modification may be possible, RideSheet is currently designed to support demand-responsive services. Deviated fixed routes have significantly different—and usually more complex—operational needs that are unlikely to be met by RideSheet in the near term.

**18. Is RideSheet similar to or related in any way to RidePilot which is an open source, web-based Computer Aided Scheduling and Dispatch (CASD) software system designed to meet the needs of small-scale human service Demand-Response Transportation (DRT) agencies? RidePilot was originally developed for Ride Connection in Portland, OR and is the program we're currently using as part of our 5310 grant.**

RidePilot was originally conceived by Kevin Chambers, who now leads Full Path and is the creator of RideSheet. Both tools are open source and aimed at serving smaller providers, though using different underlying technologies. RideSheet is aimed at the smallest of organizations and is meant to be a relatively simple proof of concept for the exchange of data for the TDS.

**19. Does Ridesheet help the two non-profits coordinate rides? I believe the area they work in is pretty rural so could this tool create cost savings with shared rides?**

It will have cost savings when everything is worked out. Lake County has paid drivers and fleet vehicles. ICFC has volunteers and private vehicles. The coordination will take this into account especially during COVID times. We are planning for the cost savings.

Coordination between the two organizations is not yet in place. The goal is for the exchange of trip request and planned itineraries to allow for more efficient use of vehicles in the many cases where trips involve the service areas of both the two agencies.

*Thank you to Kevin Chambers, Andrea Wishart and Jana Lynott for providing responses to these questions.*