



**Ride Anywhere Pilot  
Evaluation Study  
May 2025**

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the Ride Anywhere pilot launched by the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) in January 2024 per the direction of the General Assembly in the FY2024 budget.<sup>1</sup> It offers information on RIPTA's Ride complementary paratransit service, a requirement of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); provides pilot program usage statistics and customer feedback; and offers considerations for future premium paratransit service. Supporting data and other background information are presented as appendices.

## RIPTA PARATRANSIT SERVICE

The ADA obligates RIPTA to provide complementary paratransit service to eligible individuals whose disabilities prevent them from traveling to/from bus stops or from using RIPTA's fixed-route buses. RIPTA must offer this service within 3/4 mile of either side of non-commuter bus routes, whenever fixed-route buses operate (i.e., the same service spans), and without regard to a customer's trip purpose. RIPTA's paratransit service is branded as Ride (called Ride ADA in this report). Figure 1 shows RIPTA's fixed-route bus routes and the Ride ADA and Flex service areas. The Ride ADA fare (currently \$4 each way) cannot be more than twice the regular fixed-route base fare. Further, the service must operate without capacity constraints, meaning RIPTA must provide sufficient vehicles and drivers to ensure customers' Ride ADA trips take about the same time as taking the bus and that the Ride ADA vehicle arrives at pickup locations on time. To meet those requirements, Ride operates its own fleet of accessible vehicles supplemented by local taxis.

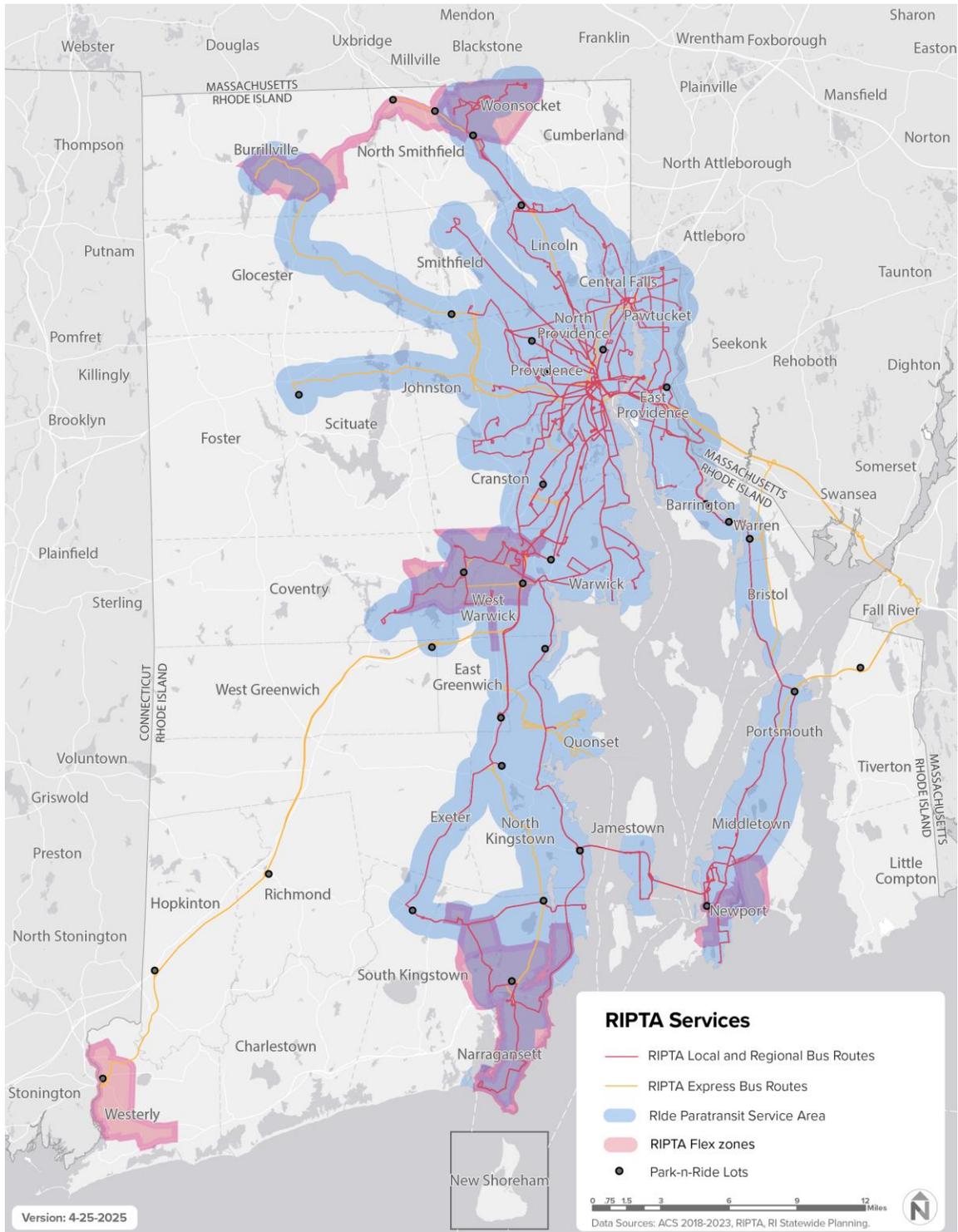
There are approximately 4,000 eligible Ride ADA customers currently enrolled in the program. The service area—the places where customers can begin or end Ride ADA trips—includes most of the state's residents, covering 819,000 people, approximately 78% of the state's population.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Ride Anywhere pilot and this evaluation study were implemented at the direction of the Rhode Island General Assembly and funded with \$500,000.

<sup>2</sup> Data based on analysis completed for the 2022 Paratransit Expansion Study.

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**Figure 1 RIPTA Services**

## RIDE ANYWHERE PILOT

The Ride Anywhere pilot is a form of premium service (see text box) that originated with the authorization of \$500,000 in the FY2024 state budget to evaluate expanding paratransit services to underserved communities. RIPTA staff considered several service delivery options to accommodate an anticipated increase in trip requests and issued a request for interested bidders to operate the service, including a partnership with a transportation network company. RIPTA's Board of Directors opted to forego such a partnership and directed RIPTA's Ride team to operate the Ride Anywhere service with its own fleet and drivers and by contracting with additional local taxi companies.

Ride Anywhere launched in January 2024 providing next-day paratransit service to eligible Ride ADA customers anywhere in the state (except New Shoreham) and throughout RIPTA's service day. RIPTA attributed trips to the pilot program if they originated and/or ended outside the ADA service area or were scheduled outside the adjacent fixed-route bus service hours.

The pilot was initially scheduled to end on December 31, 2024, but at its November meeting, RIPTA's board voted to extend Ride Anywhere into 2025. Approximately \$411,000 was expended in 2024, excluding fees for consultant support. As of April 2025, the pilot program remained active.

### **Premium Service**

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) defines premium service as "any paratransit services that a transit operator provides above and beyond its regulatory obligations. This could include...operating paratransit service beyond the fixed-route service area, providing service when the fixed-route system is not running, or by exceeding the basic next-day service requirement. In such cases, the operator would not be bound by the service criteria for ADA complementary paratransit, including the requirement that limits the fare to no more than twice the fare for a comparable trip on the fixed-route system." FTA's guidance also strongly advises transit operators to continue to comply with the ADA requirements.

See <https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/civil-rights-ada/premium-charges-paratransit-services>.

## 2 RIDE ANYWHERE ADOPTION AND USAGE

In 2024, 357 unique customers (8.9% of all eligible) utilized Ride Anywhere to travel to/from locations outside of the Ride ADA service area or when Ride service was previously unavailable. These 357 customers took 7,309 trips. By comparison, RIPTA provided over 158,000 ADA trips to 3,108 customers during the same period. Notably, just 27 customers took half of all Ride Anywhere trips in the first year of the pilot.

### RIDERSHIP AND SERVICE TRENDS

RIPTA launched the Ride Anywhere pilot program in January 2024 and limited promotion so it could ramp up service delivery without having to deny trip requests to program participants. As such, customer growth was gradual with 357 customers taking at least one Ride Anywhere trip in 2024. Table 1 shows the number of customers taking their first Ride Anywhere trip by month. While Ride Anywhere was not marketed broadly, the relatively low usage compared with Ride ADA usage reflects the significant population covered within the Ride ADA service area. In addition, most important destinations in the state (medical, educational, recreational, retail, and employment) are within or very close to the ADA service area.

**Table 1 New Customer Use of Ride Anywhere Pilot (Calendar Year 2024)**

Month	New Customers	Cumulative Customers
Jan	21	21
Feb	52	73
Mar	39	112
Apr	18	130
May	37	167
Jun	29	196
Jul	29	225
Aug	26	251
Sep	37	288
Oct	21	309
Nov	24	333
Dec	24	357

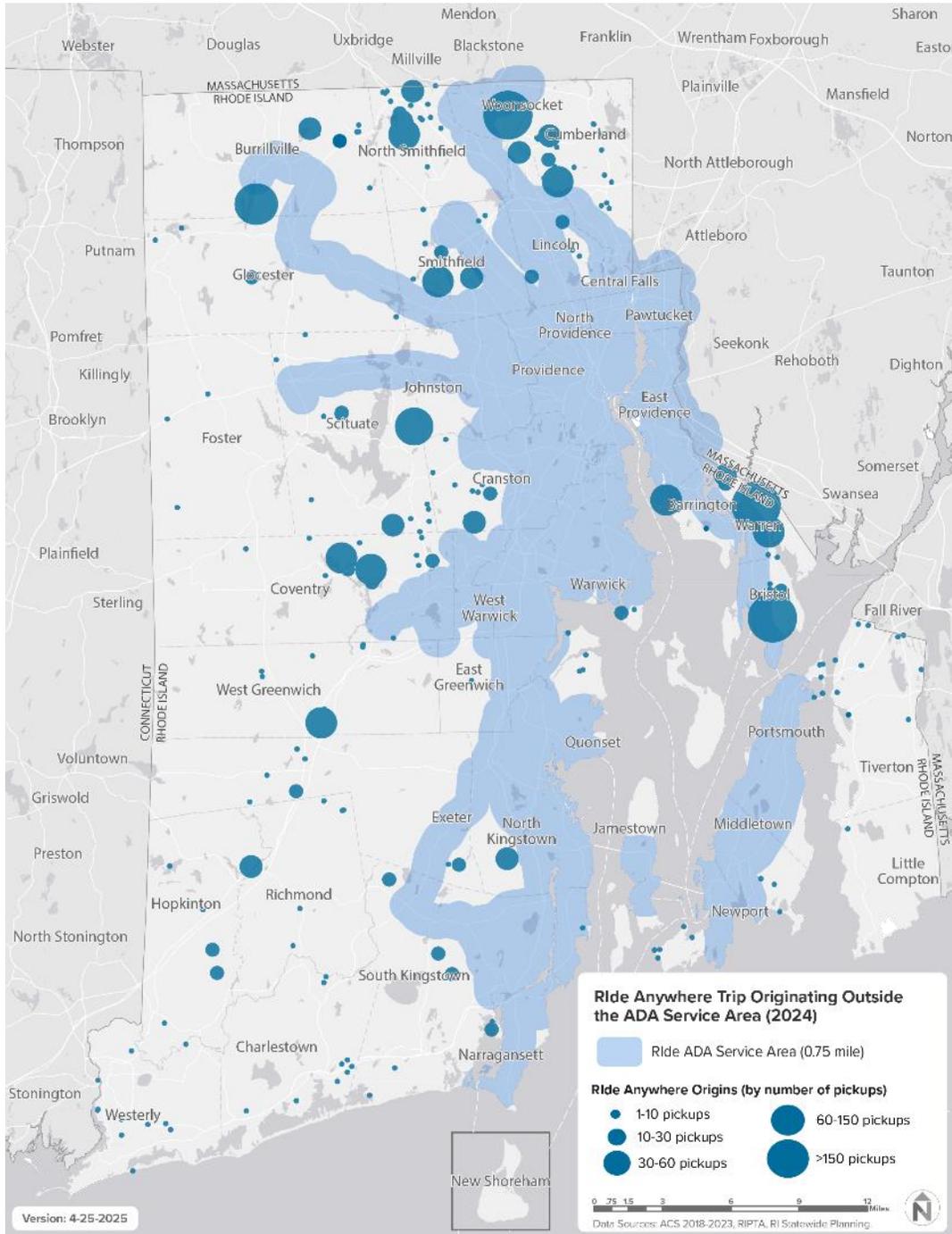
Source: RIPTA

# RIDE ANYWHERE TRIP ORIGINS AND DESTINATIONS

Using 2024 data, the consultant team plotted the addresses of Ride Anywhere trip origins (pickups) and destinations (drop-offs). Figure 2 illustrates trip origins (pickup locations) that began outside the ADA service area as well as the relative number of trips from each location. Figure 3 shows the drop-off locations and the relative number of trips to each location.

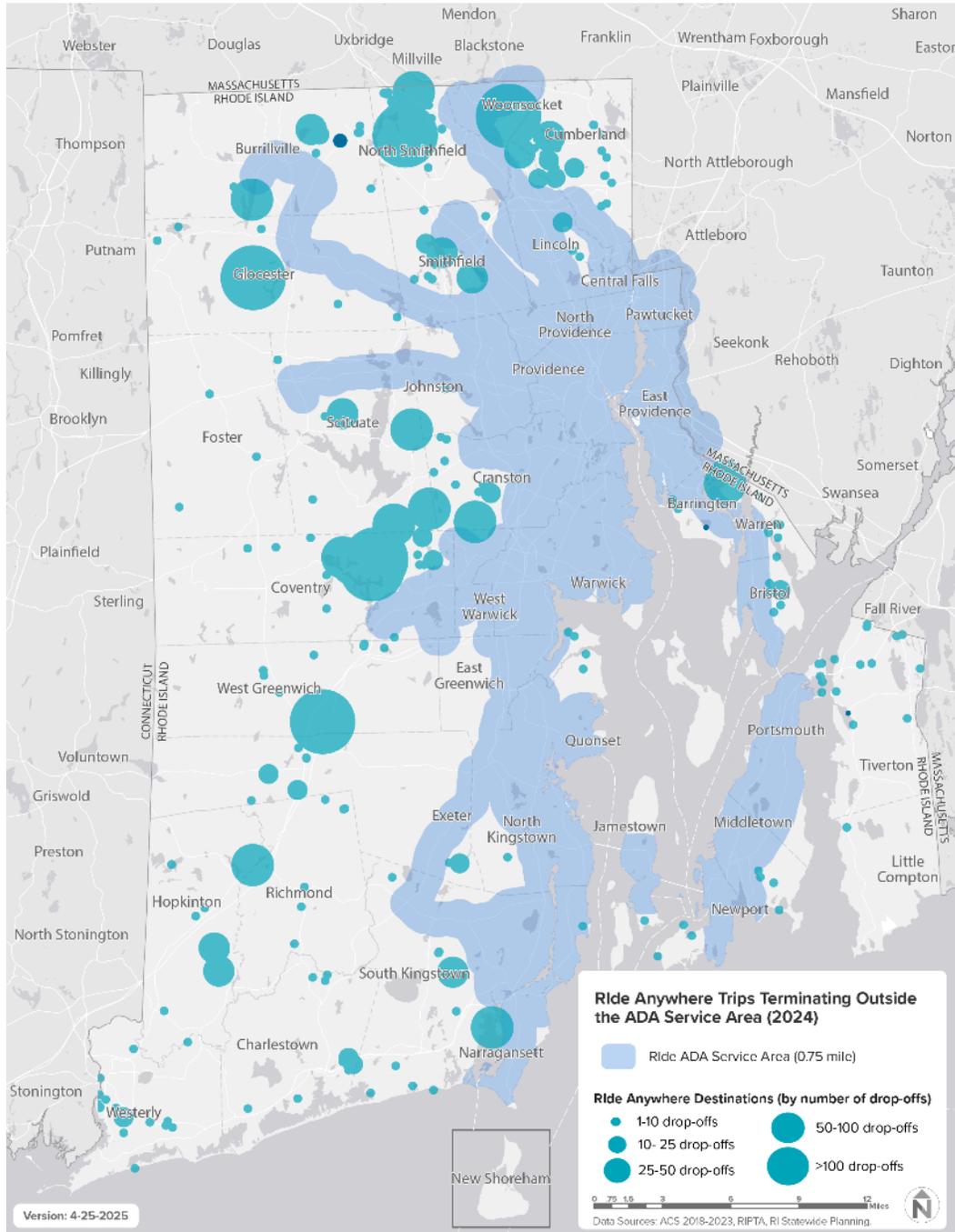
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**Figure 2 Ride Anywhere Trip Origins (2024)**



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**Figure 3 Ride Anywhere Trip Destinations (2024)**



## Ride Anywhere Trip Origins Compared with RIPTA Bus Routes

The team tabulated the trip origins (pickups) for all 7,309 Ride Anywhere trips and identified the 975 unique pickup addresses. The team also measured the distance of each pickup location from RIPTA bus routes. Trips that began within 0.75 miles of a bus route were within the ADA service area and trips that began beyond that distance were outside the ADA service area. Table 2 presents these Ride Anywhere trips according to the address’s distance from a bus route.

### Trips Originating Outside the ADA Service Area

As shown in the table, 2,680 of the 7,309 Ride Anywhere trips began outside the ADA service area. Of these, 340 trips (13%) began from 38 locations (16%) just outside the ADA service area (between three fourths of a mile and one mile from a bus route). Further, 1,428 trips (53%) began from 101 locations (42%) between one and two miles of a bus route.

**Table 2 Ride Anywhere Trip Origins (Pickups) by Distance from Fixed-Route Service**

Pickups outside ADA Service Area by Distance from RIPTA bus routes	Number of Trips	Percent Outside ADA	Unique Addresses	Percent Outside ADA
0.75–1 mile	340	13%	38	16%
1–2 miles	1,428	53%	101	42%
2–3 miles	405	15%	28	12%
3–4 miles	20	1%	9	4%
4–5 miles	22	1%	13	5%
More than 5 miles	465	17%	53	22%
<b>Total pickups outside ADA service area</b>	<b>2,680</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>100%</b>
<i>Pickups within ADA service area (&lt;0.75 miles)</i>	4,629	-	733	-
<b>All pickups</b>	<b>7,309</b>	-	<b>975</b>	-

Source: RIPTA (percentages rounded)

### Trips Ending Outside the ADA Service Area (Drop-offs)

Table 3 presents information for Ride Anywhere trips ending outside the ADA service area. As shown, 2,986 of the 7,309 drop-offs took place outside the ADA service area. Of these, 359 trips (12%) ended at 50 locations (17%) just outside the ADA service area (between three

## Ride Anywhere Premium ADA Service Pilot Evaluation

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fourths of a mile and one mile from a bus route). Further, 1,421 trips (51%) ended at 112 locations (39%) between one and two miles of a bus route.

**Table 3 Ride Anywhere Non-ADA Drop-off Locations by Distance from Fixed-Route Service**

Drop-offs outside ADA Service Area by Distance from RIPTA bus routes	Number of Trips	Percent Outside ADA	Unique Addresses	Percent Outside ADA
0.75–1 mile	359	12%	50	17%
1–2 miles	1,521	51%	112	39%
2–3 miles	514	17%	29	10%
3–4 miles	20	1%	10	3%
4–5 miles	26	1%	14	5%
More than 5 miles	546	18%	72	25%
<b>Total drop-offs outside ADA service area</b>	<b>2,986</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>100%</b>
<i>Drop-offs within ADA service area (&lt;0.75 miles)</i>	4,323	-	722	-
<b>All drop-offs</b>	<b>7,309</b>	-	<b>1,009</b>	-

Source: RIPTA (percentages rounded)

## 3 CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

The consultant team obtained customer input about their experiences with the RIde Anywhere premium service pilot. Outreach included individual interviews with eight customers and one taxi provider, a small focus group with five participants, and a concurrent web survey available in both English and Spanish.

### INTERVIEWS

The team recruited candidates for individual interviews by consulting usage data, contacting individuals who had expressed interest to RIPTA staff, and following staff recommendations. Interviews took place on Zoom or via telephone with conversations lasting 15 minutes to one hour, with an average interview length of 30 minutes. Questions emphasized riders' transportation needs, travel patterns, benefits and drawbacks of existing RIde Anywhere service, and suggestions for improvements to existing service. (For a full list of questions, consult Appendix A).

### KEY THEMES

The team summarized recurring themes and specific comments below.

#### Independence

Several customers credit the RIde Anywhere pilot program with improving or even restoring their independence. Because RIde ADA customers were no longer limited to traveling within the RIde ADA service area, customers could expand the types of destinations they could access on transit, improving their quality of life and preventing them from feeling like a burden on family, friends, and colleagues.

Newly accessible trips ranged from trips to work, medical facilities, gyms and physical therapy offices, performance venues, loved ones' homes, beaches and parks, movie theatres, shopping centers, and even political and advocacy events. For several customers residing outside the RIde ADA service area, the pilot enabled them to independently travel to destinations within the RIde ADA service area. Those customers expressed a strong preference to contact a transportation provider (RIPTA) to schedule a trip instead of relying upon friends or family. The door-to-door nature of RIde Anywhere eliminated the need to rely on a colleague or relative to bring them to or from a drop-off or pickup point.

The pilot program was especially game-changing for customers with progressive disabilities who described the struggle of losing independence. Several previously faced the difficult decision of whether to relocate elsewhere in the state or change other key features of their

lives or accept their lack of independence and potential isolation. Ride Anywhere service was described by two customers as the thing that “most improved [their] quality of life” in 2024 by allowing them to travel independently.

## **Examples**

### **Evening Hours**

- One rider used Ride Anywhere to independently attend a performance that ended after Ride ADA service would have previously ended.
- Prior to the pilot program, one rider struggled to attend night classes after work because, although the classes were in the Ride ADA service area, they ended after Ride ADA service hours. This rider was sometimes forced to miss classes due to classmates’ and family members’ availability.

### **Physical Health**

- One rider who lives outside of the Ride ADA service area used Ride Anywhere to regularly attend specialized exercise classes that improved their physical health and mobility and served as a social opportunity. This rider described themselves as previously being isolated and struggling with rapidly declining physical fitness.
- One rider who lives within the Ride ADA service area used Ride Anywhere to access their primary care physician, who moved from an office within the Ride ADA service area to a facility outside the Ride ADA service area.

### **Employment**

- One rider who lives within the Ride ADA service area but works in a region without Ride ADA service used Ride Anywhere five days a week for their commute. Previously, they relied on coworkers and family and often had to frantically schedule and reschedule their trips to ensure they could arrive at work on time.

### **Family Connections**

- One rider who lives within the Ride ADA service area used Ride Anywhere to travel to a family member’s house less than ½ mile outside the Ride ADA service area. Previously, this rider had to be dropped off at a secondary location and wait for their family member to pick them up and drive them the final three minutes to their home.

## Service Efficiency

Although the interviewed customers found the Ride Anywhere service to be excellent overall, some customers described features of the service that illustrate potential challenges to the pilot program's long-term sustainability. Of the eight customers interviewed, seven described often being the only rider on a RIPTA Ride vehicle for the entire duration of their pilot trip. One rider reported being alone even on Ride ADA trips that occur in peak commute travel periods, such as between 7 and 9 a.m. and 4 and 6 p.m.

These efficiency issues are likely linked to RIPTA's limited trip negotiation policy. All customers interviewed never experienced trip negotiations or trip denials after the start of the Ride Anywhere pilot program: RIPTA fulfilled their requested trips in both programs at the requested times. In the future, by negotiating some pickup and drop-off times, RIPTA could better group trips and avoid costly inefficiencies, such as Ride vans with only one passenger.

## Taxi Service

Customers had varying experiences with Ride Anywhere service depending on their vehicles.

- Several customers voiced a preference for RIPTA vans due to the friendliness and good service of the drivers.
- Customers who require wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs) also expressed their gratitude to RIPTA drivers: Drivers were described as well-trained, respectful, kind, on-time, and skilled at safe wheelchair securement.
- Customers who also take Ride trips in taxis had comparatively more complaints about driver professionalism, though these complaints were not major.
- One rider voiced a preference for taxi service due to the potential for interpersonal connection but also had a clear preference for specific drivers and companies, again highlighting the variability of service across providers.

There were also some clear discrepancies in on-time performance depending on whether the trip was fulfilled by a RIPTA vehicle or a taxi service:

- Customers voiced their concern that taxis do not track their movement effectively and are not adequately integrated into the GPS system, resulting in delays and unusual trip routes that add time to trips.
- Taxi drivers are also less likely to alert customers that they are running late, contributing to a lack of clarity around arrival times. This did not apply to all taxi services and drivers—two customers singled out one operator as an excellent taxi

driver and provider—but overall uncertainty around taxi service contributes to a clear preference for RIPTA vehicles for many customers.

## **FOCUS GROUP**

A virtual focus group was conducted on February 6, 2025, to hear from five additional Ride Anywhere customers. Four of the five participants were semi-regular (weekly or monthly) Ride Anywhere customers who used the program for social, educational, recreational, shopping, and medical destinations, such as political events, group functions, beauty appointments, physical therapy, and errands. Two participants live more than 2 miles outside of the current Ride ADA service area and could not use RIPTA services regularly prior to the pilot program.

Much of the feedback received in the focus group corresponded to the key findings from longer interviews. Participants appreciated the flexibility of the pilot service and the accessibility for all Rhode Island residents for all trip purposes, even those in more rural communities. All participants expressed wishes for the pilot program to continue to keep improving their quality of life and independence. Importantly, some participants voiced that they would still utilize and support the Ride Anywhere service if fares were higher than standard Ride ADA fare a reflection of the premium service nature of the pilot program.

Others asked for better ways to track trips provided by taxi contractors and for improved communications about vehicle ETA, an issue of particular importance for low-vision customers.

## **CUSTOMER SURVEY**

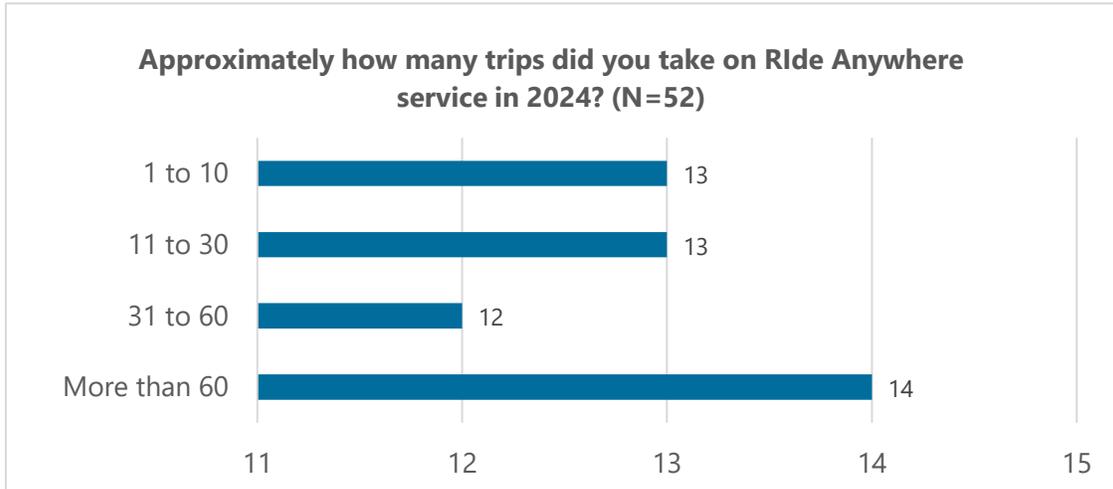
RIPTA's consultant team distributed an accessible online survey via email to all Ride Anywhere customers with a known email address. The SurveyMonkey survey was available in both English and Spanish; there were no Spanish survey respondents. Appendix A provides a copy of the survey questions.

Of the 80 survey respondents, 55 stated they took at least one Ride Anywhere trip in 2024. Trip purposes on Ride Anywhere were diverse, with medical appointments, visiting family and friends, and recreation and leisure comprising the most trips. Many respondents were semi-regular customers, with over 60 trips in 2024. See Figure 4.

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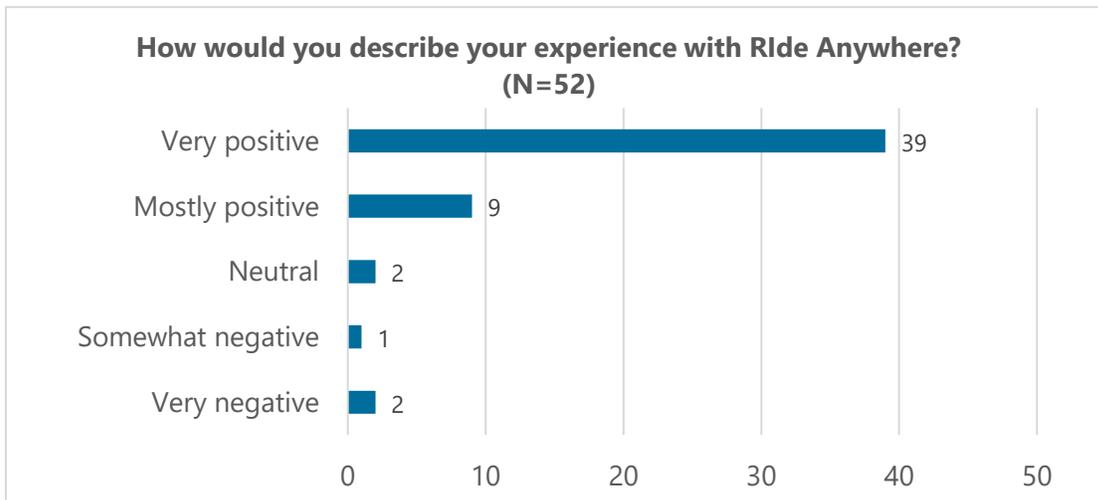
**Figure 4 Ride Anywhere Trip Frequency Survey Question**



Source: Customer survey

Experiences with Ride Anywhere were overwhelmingly positive, with most respondents describing their experiences as very positive or positive. Customers also shared extremely positive descriptions of the service: "... lifesaver"; "... it helps me to be able to participate in social interaction"; "... extremely reliable and consistent"; "... allows me to live independently." See Figure 5. Overall, respondents emphasized the accessibility and convenience the service brings to their life. See Appendix A for additional suggestions and responses to open questions.

**Figure 5 Customer Opinion of Ride Anywhere Survey Question**



Source: Customer survey

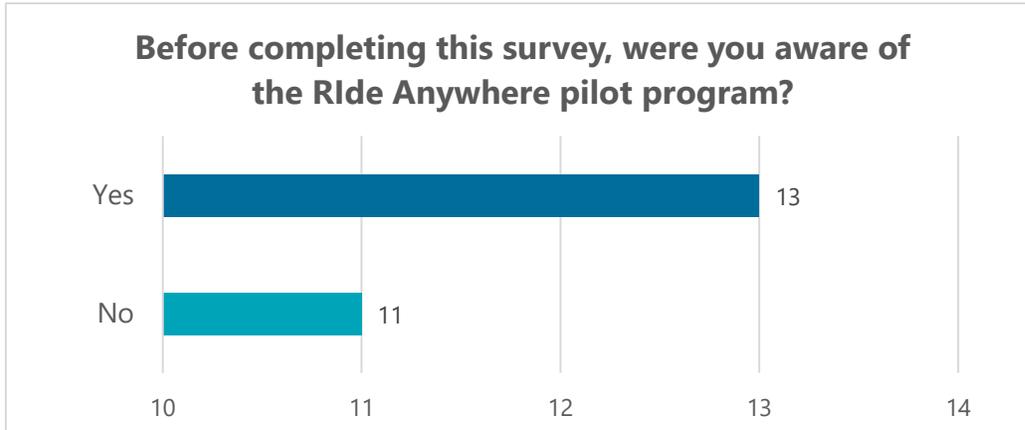
Of the 25 customers who had not reported taking a Ride Anywhere trip, 46% had not heard of the pilot program prior to the survey. This is reflective of the limited publicity and

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marketing around Ride Anywhere prior to December 2024 when RIPTA issued a press release announcing the pilot program would continue into 2025. A majority of the 11 respondents who had heard of the service but opted not to use it stated that the existing Ride service met their needs. See Figure 6.

**Figure 6 Ride Anywhere Program Awareness Survey Question**



Source: Customer survey

## 4 PROGRAM COST AND CAPACITY ANALYSIS

### SERVICE MODEL AND PER-TRIP COSTS

To ensure sufficient capacity was available to deliver Ride ADA trips, RIPTA assigned approximately 80% of the Ride Anywhere trips in 2024 to taxi contractors. RIPTA covered 100% of the taxi fares, which totaled \$361,400 in 2024. The net cost per taxi trip, excluding collected rider fares of \$4 per trip, was just under \$56. This cost does not include any overhead allocation for program oversight (processing invoices, reconciling trip details after the fact, or field monitoring to ensure compliance). The total cost per RIPTA-provided trips (using Ride vans) was \$79,600 and the net cost (excluding collected fares), was approximately \$58. All told, the net service delivery costs for 2024 were \$411,300.

### Trips Previously Partly Delivered by RIPTA

Before the Ride Anywhere pilot program launched, some Ride customers with trip origins or destinations outside the ADA service area used Ride service for a portion of their trip and transferred to/from another mode at a designated meeting point. With the Ride Anywhere pilot program, customers were able to use RIPTA's services to complete their entire trip. While it was not possible to identify the costs of prior Ride trips to/from these meeting locations or to quantify how often riders transferred to other modes, RIPTA would likely have incurred some of these costs without the pilot program.

### DETERMINING FUTURE COSTS

To evaluate RIPTA's capacity to meet additional demand and to evaluate future program costs, the consultant team selected a sample week from October 2024. The following discussion includes all Ride trip data for the week of October 20–26.

### Distribution of Trips by Provider Type

Table 5 shows the Ride ADA and Ride Anywhere trips and provider type by service during the sample week when 2,692 Ride trips and 695 Ride Anywhere trips took place. As shown, RIPTA provided 82% of the Ride ADA trips and 13% of the Ride Anywhere trips. Taxi contractors provided 18% of the Ride ADA trips and 87% of the Ride Anywhere trips during the sample week.

**Table 4 Sample Week Distribution of Trips by Provider (October 20–26, 2024)**

Provider/Program	Ride ADA		Ride Anywhere		Total
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
RIPTA	2,195	82%	30	13%	2,225
Taxi contactors	497	18%	195	87%	695
Total	2,692	100%	225	100%	2,917
Share of trips	92%		8%		100%

Source: RIPTA

## Sample Week Costs

Costs during the sample week are comprised of revenue hour data for RIPTA-provided trips and actual taxi reimbursements for contractor-provided trips. Net service costs for the week exclude fares collected. Table 5 presents the net costs per trip by provider type and by service type.

**Table 5 Sample Week Net Service Delivery Cost by Provider (October 20–26, 2024)**

Provider/Program	Ride ADA	Ride Anywhere	Total
<b>RIPTA van trips</b>	2,195	30	2,225
RIPTA net costs	\$95,957	\$1,722	\$97,679
RIPTA cost per trip	\$43.72	\$57.40	\$43.90
<b>Taxi trips</b>	497	195	692
Taxi net costs	\$23,864	\$10,968	\$34,832
Taxi cost per trip	\$48.02	\$56.25	\$50.34
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$119,821</b>	<b>\$12,690</b>	<b>\$132,511</b>
Cost per trip	\$44.51	\$56.40	\$45.43

Source: RIPTA, Nelson\Nygaard

## RIPTA-provided Trips

As shown, based on Ride service hours and RIPTA’s Ride rate of \$115.14 per hour, RIPTA’s net cost per trip during the sample week was \$43.72 for Ride ADA trips and \$57.40 for Ride Anywhere pilot trips. The lower per-trip cost for Ride ADA trips reflects shorter trips and more shared rides than taxi-provided trips, consistent with RIPTA delivering most of the Ride trips within the ADA service area.

## Taxi-provided Trips

Based on actual reimbursements, the net cost of taxi-provided Ride ADA trips during the sample week was \$48.02 per trip, about \$4.30 more than RIPTA-provided trips. The net cost for taxi-provided Ride Anywhere trips was \$56.25 per trip, slightly less than RIPTA's per-trip cost.

## Administrative Cost Considerations

The above data for RIPTA's per-trip costs include administrative overhead expenses for operating the entire Ride ADA service. Conversely, the presented taxi costs are direct fees with no overhead expenses allocated to them. Going forward, the costs of administering the Ride Anywhere program, including contractor oversight, should be included in program-delivery costs.

## ANTICIPATED FUTURE DEMAND

The Ride Anywhere pilot has provided an important mobility benefit to eligible Ride ADA customers whose travel needs cannot be met by the ADA-required Ride paratransit service. However, the number of Ride customers who used Ride Anywhere in 2024 was relatively low; approximately 10% of all 4,000 eligible Ride customers took at least one trip during the year. Within this customer base, 27 customers took about half of Ride Anywhere trips in 2024. This relatively high pilot program usage by a small share of Ride customers is an indicator that the pilot service is meeting important travel needs of a relatively small number of customers. Based on the above, the number of future customers is unlikely to grow significantly. The consultant team estimates that given current circumstances, fewer than 500 ADA customers will use the service per year.

## FUTURE PILOT PROGRAM COSTS

In 2024, Ride Anywhere program costs were approximately \$411,000, excluding evaluation study expenses. As discussed above, the net program costs for the October sample week were \$12,500. While it is difficult to predict precisely how many current ADA customers will use Ride Anywhere going forward or how many additional individuals with disabilities will apply for eligibility and take Ride Anywhere trips, the consultant team used the sample week data to estimate the future program costs. The short-term estimate is between \$550,000 and \$750,000 per year, not accounting for inflation. This range was determined by multiplying the \$12,500 sample week net costs by 52 ( $\$12,500 \times 52 = \$650,000$ ) and using this figure as the midpoint of the range ( $\pm \$100,000$ ).

## 5 FINDINGS

Operating a geographically dispersed paratransit service such as Ride Anywhere requires a substantial level of investment due to high per-passenger costs, limited multi-loading opportunities, and the associated need for sufficient vehicles and operators. In view of RIPTA's budget challenges, the following policy considerations are offered.

### CHARGING A PREMIUM FARE

As noted, while transit agencies are free to offer paratransit services that exceed the minimum ADA requirements, FTA guidance on premium service notes that transit agencies should "not be bound by the service criteria for ADA complementary paratransit, including the requirement that limits the fare to no more than twice the fare for a comparable trip on the fixed-route system."<sup>3</sup>

Most transit agencies offering premium paratransit service charge a higher fare than charged for ADA service. For example, the MBTA in Boston charges \$3.35 per trip for RIDE service and \$5.60 for premium trips (trips with origins and/or destinations greater than 3/4 miles from MBTA bus or subway service).<sup>4</sup> The MBTA offers eligible seniors or income-eligible customers reduced fares for ADA and premium trips. In Pittsburgh, the Access ADA program one-way fare is \$3.15 within the base (3/4-mile) service area and \$5.25 beyond the base service area.

The consultant team recommends charging a premium fare for service that exceeds the minimum ADA requirements. For example, RIPTA may wish to charge Ride Anywhere customers twice the ADA fare but continue to apply fare-capping rules to daily and monthly fare expenditures.

### NEGOTIATING TRIP TIMES

The ADA obligates RIPTA to meet its minimum obligations for complementary paratransit service (Ride ADA). This means operating without capacity constraints, ensuring customers' Ride ADA trips take about the same time as taking the bus, and that the Ride ADA vehicle arrives at pickup locations on time. RIPTA cannot accept premium trip requests at the expense of providing ADA service.

Most transit agencies operating premium service meet their ADA obligations by establishing more stringent rules for premium service. Examples include negotiating trip times including

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/civil-rights-ada/premium-charges-paratransit-services>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.mbta.com/accessibility/the-ride/ride-fares-and-adding-funds>

offering pickup times fit best into Ride schedules. While this may result in occasional trip offers that do not meet customer needs, most customers prefer to be offered a guaranteed trip time versus not receiving any trip offers. Other agencies use waiting lists, meaning call takers record the requested trip information, place it on a waiting list and confirm the trip later, often the night before travel. Other transit agencies employ monthly trip caps to ensure all potential customers have equal access to the service. See callout box for potential ways to describe Ride Anywhere in public materials.

**Potential Ride Anywhere Program Description**

Should RIPTA use this approach for Ride Anywhere, public statements may include:

- Ride Anywhere is a premium service providing paratransit service to eligible customers to/from locations more than 3/4 miles from a RIPTA bus route or at times when RIPTA bus service is not available.
- The ADA obligates RIPTA to ensure Ride ADA service accommodates all eligible trip requests. Accordingly, customers requesting Ride Anywhere trips may not be able to be picked up or dropped off at the times they request. Further, customer service agents may place trip requests on a waiting list and confirm the trip details at another time.
- On rare occasions, RIPTA may not be able to fulfill a Ride Anywhere trip request.

## **MANAGING DEMAND WHILE SUPPORTING MOBILITY**

Most transit agencies of RIPTA's size conduct in-person interviews for all new paratransit applicants and certain recertifications of existing customers. Agencies also conduct functional assessments for certain applicants to better determine their ability to travel to/from or use fixed-route service. RIPTA currently uses a paper application for Ride eligibility and is preparing to adopt an online application process. RIPTA should also consider moving to in-person eligibility interviews and functional assessments. While implementing this change would require investing in start-up resources and additional operating costs initially, it would likely reduce the number of approved customers.

## **CONTRACTING WITH NON-DEDICATED SERVICE PROVIDERS**

For the Ride Anywhere pilot, RIPTA assigned trips to taxi companies licensed to operate in the state and reimbursed them using commercial fares. While such an arrangement is appropriate for a pilot, RIPTA may wish to explore contracts with a range of non-dedicated service providers (NDSPs), including taxi companies, that can provide vehicles and drivers to meet program demands.

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A range of options exists including companies such as SilverRide and UZERV. The benefits of contracting with NDSPs are improved reliability, technology integration, and cost savings. Agencies that contract with NDSPs typically need to dedicate staff to contract monitoring. In addition, when issuing requests for proposals (RFPs) for NDSPs, it is beneficial to offer a minimum number of daily trips, thus increasing the number of vendors who may bid. In addition, by guaranteeing a minimum number of daily trips local vendors can use such contracts to finance operational expansion.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Ride Anywhere pilot program has filled an important mobility gap for certain individuals who have limited or no options available to travel to/from destinations outside the Ride ADA service area. To continue to provide a premium paratransit service while fulfilling its ADA obligations, RIPTA would need to invest in operations, eligibility, and service delivery while adopting sustainable program parameters. Such investments would require dedicated funding to sustain service in the future.

# APPENDIX A

## RIDE ANYWHERE RIDER SURVEY QUESTIONS

### Survey Introduction

Launched in January 2024, the Ride Anywhere pilot program provides paratransit service throughout Rhode Island to qualified Ride customers. RIPTA is seeking feedback from those who have used the service, and we invite you to answer a few questions about your experience using Ride Anywhere, Ride, and RIPTA service. This survey should take 5 minutes to complete. An independent team will review all answers and summarize the results as part of an evaluation study that will be shared with the Rhode Island legislature in 2025.

### Survey Questions

1. Which of the following services do you currently use? Please select all that apply.
  - a. Ride Anywhere (pilot paratransit program offering statewide service)
  - b. Ride (RIPTA ADA paratransit service)
  - c. RIPTA fixed-route bus
  - d. RIPTA Flex
  - e. Other (please specify)
2. Before completing this survey, were you aware of the Ride Anywhere pilot program?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
3. What is your reason for not using the Ride Anywhere program?
  - a. The Ride paratransit program meets my travel needs.
  - b. I have not yet had the chance to try the service.
  - c. Other (please specify)
4. Would you use Ride Anywhere service if you needed to travel outside the current ADA paratransit service area?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Unsure

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5. How did you first hear about Ride Anywhere?
  - a. RIPTA website
  - b. RIPTA customer service staff
  - c. ATAC meeting
  - d. Other riders/ word of mouth
  - e. Social media (Facebook, Instagram, etc.)
  - f. Other (please specify)
6. Approximately how many trips have you taken on the Ride Anywhere service in 2024?
  - a. 1 to 10
  - b. 11 to 30
  - c. 31 to 60
  - d. More than 60
  - e. I don't know
7. Please tell us about your use of the Ride Anywhere service. Select up to two choices.
  - a. It brings me to locations I cannot get to using Ride paratransit.
  - b. I reside outside the Ride paratransit service area.
  - c. I can travel at times when Ride paratransit is not available to me.
  - d. Other (please specify)
8. Please tell us the types of places or trip purposes for which you use Ride Anywhere. Select all that apply.
  - a. Commuting to work
  - b. Going to school
  - c. Medical appointments
  - d. Grocery shopping/errands
  - e. Visiting friends/family
  - f. Leisure/recreation
  - g. Other (please specify)
9. How would you describe your experience with Ride Anywhere?
  - a. Very positive
  - b. Mostly positive
  - c. Somewhat positive
  - d. Neutral
  - e. Somewhat negative

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- f. Mostly negative
  - g. Very negative
10. Please share any further thoughts on Ride Anywhere.
11. Approximately how many trips have you taken with Ride paratransit service in 2024? These trips are within the paratransit service area (within  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile of a bus route). This service was available before the pilot launched.
- a. No trips
  - b. 1 to 10
  - c. 11 to 30
  - d. 31 to 60
  - e. 61 to 100
  - f. More than 100
  - g. I don't know.
12. Are you currently employed or in school?
- a. Yes, employed
  - b. Yes, in school
  - c. Yes, I am both employed and in school
  - d. No
13. How old are you?
- a. Under 18
  - b. 18-24
  - c. 25-34
  - d. 35-44
  - e. 45-54
  - f. 55-64
  - g. 65-74
  - h. 75-84
  - i. 85+
14. How would you describe your disability and mobility challenges?
15. What is your zip code?
16. Please share any further thoughts on Ride service.

Thank you!

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Thank you for providing feedback on Ride and/or Ride Anywhere service! Your time and feedback are invaluable to this process.