

Paratransit into the Future: as structured in the upcoming STAR Call Center RFP



TPB Regional Public Transportation Subcommittee
March 28, 2017

- STAR is a locally sponsored paratransit alternative for MetroAccess-certified Arlington residents
- STAR uses dedicated vehicles & Taxi-dispatch.
- STAR currently provides curb-to-curb service, booked 7-1 days in advance.

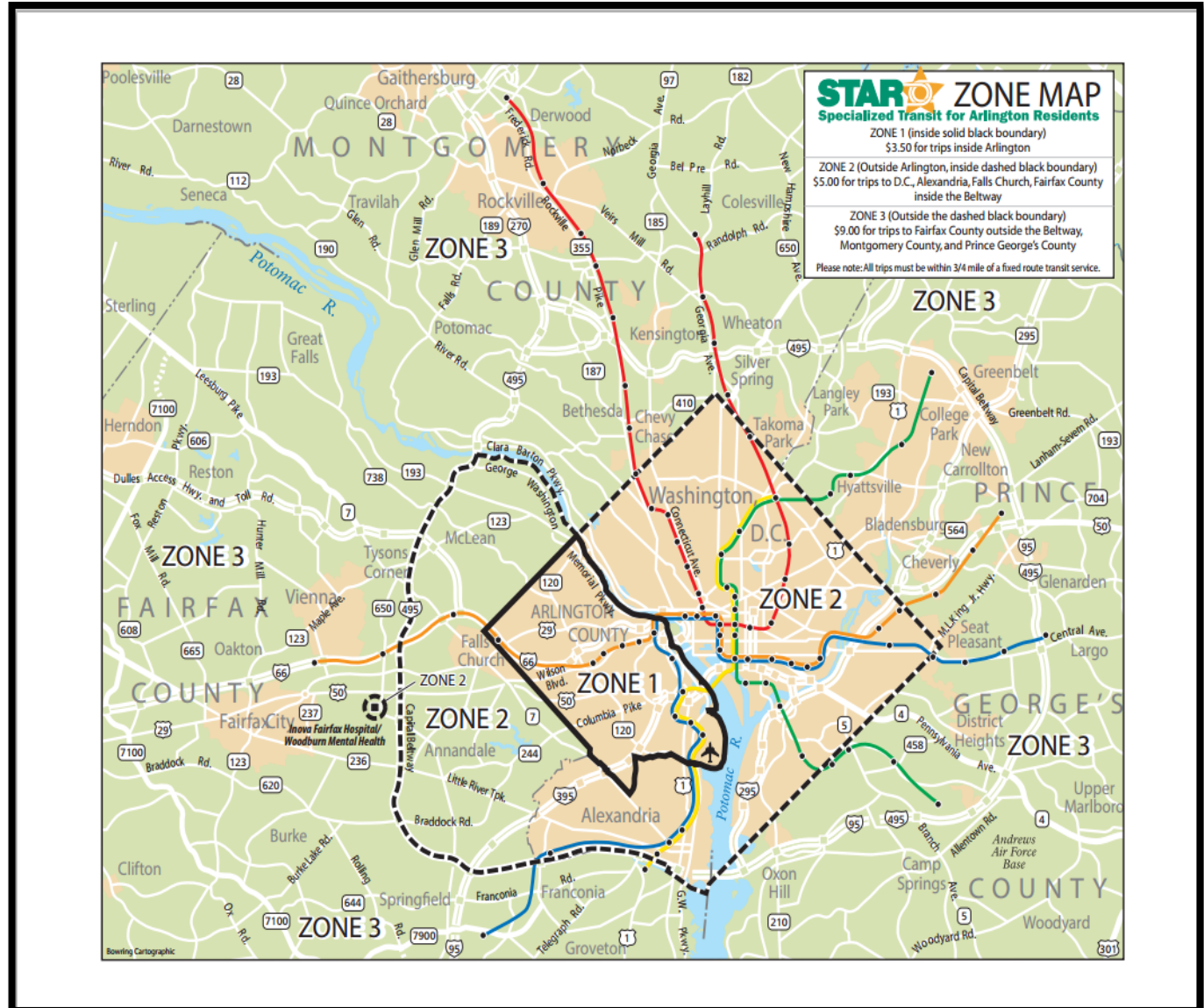
STAR Service Area & Fare Zones

STAR Zone Fares

Zone 1 (trips within Arlington): **\$3.50**

Zone 2 (trips to/from DC, NVA inside I-495, & Fairfax Hospital): **\$5.00**

Zone 3 (trips to/from MD and western Fairfax): **\$9.00**



Rides Provided:

- ADA Alternative: 86,417
- Human Service: 14,320

Cost per Ride: \$32.91

Average Fare: \$4.57

Scheduling Productivity

- Rides Scheduled/Hour: 1.36
- Rides Provided/Hour: 1.01

Policy Oversight by

- Transit Advisory Committee,
- Transportation Commission,
- Disability Advisory Commission,
- Transportation Committee of the Area Agency on Aging, and of course
- the County Board

- Transportation provided with 14 accessible Dedicated Vehicles provided under contract with Diamond Transportation



- Prequalified and vetted Red Top Cab drivers, using sedans and accessible minivans



- Book and Schedule Rides
- Assign rides to Transportation Providers
- Reconcile Rides to produce NTD and County reports
- Review Transportation Provider billing
- Lead with Customer Relations

- **Challenges**

- Pickup Window tightest in the industry for Paratransit: 0-10 Minutes
- Static Schedules Produced after 6pm previous working day
- X% Same-Day Bookings/Ready-Now Returns
- Y% Cancellations; Z% No-Shows

- **Remedies**

- New Pickup Window of +/- 10 Minutes
- Ability to shift trips between vehicles real-time

- Challenges

- Very low rate of standing order rides (7%)
- Scheduling Software not reliable on estimating travel time (due to triangulation methodology)
- Over-Reliance on booking at pickup time

- Remedies

- Use street speeds, with actual posted speeds modified by historical data
- Improved ability to book by needed arrival time

- **Challenges**

- Static Schedules Produced after 6pm previous working day
- X% Same-Day Bookings/Ready-Now Returns
- Y% Cancellations; Z% No-Shows

- **Remedies**

- Use of GPS-enabled tablets on dedicated vehicles and eligible taxis
- Ability to shift trips between vehicles real-time
- Electronic communications between Call Center, Dispatch & Vehicles

- **Challenges**

- Electronic communications currently only from the Call Center to the Dedicated Provider
- Where's My Ride Inquiries involves calls to call center, then dispatch, then driver and ← !

- **Remedies**

- **2-Way Electronic Communications between the Call Center and both vendors**
- **Provision of a Where's My Ride App for Smartphones and desktops**

- **Challenges**
 - Scheduling Productivity is less than adequate.
 - Lack of electronic communications from transportation vendors to Call Center impacts reporting
 - Current technology makes assessment of performance incentives/disincentives very difficult

- Remedies

- New Pickup Window and real-time trip reassignment will improve scheduling productivity and fill gaps due to cancellations and no-shows
- 2-way electronic data transmission enables precise reporting of revenue hours, miles & passenger miles
- Precise data allows assessment of performance incentives/disincentives
 - On-Time Performance is a shared responsibility between the Call Center and transportation vendors

Challenges

- Website met 508 Standards and processing speed expectations 7 years ago. New 508 Standards have recently been proposed by the US Access Board
- IVR is clunky, difficult to use – and consequently seldom used.

Remedies

- Requesting update of the website, update and maintenance of www.arlingtonstar.com with associated email, and proposal whether to continue IVR

Challenges

- Scrip bookkeeping is expensive – and some riders tend to hoard scrip
- Some riders have difficulty handling scrip or cash due to their disability

Remedies

- Replace scrip either with a swipe card or smart-chip card that works for STAR and human service transportation programs
- **Include a debit-based accounting system emulating Easy-Pass**
 - **Riders would deposit funds into an account or use a credit account**
 - **The fare for each trip booked would be debited.**
 - **The fare for each trip cancelled would be credited.**

Challenges

- Some fixed route (especially midday) will never meet productivity standards
- Use of Uber/Lyft or Taxi may not meet requirements of the ADA

Remedies

- Offer app-based 1st Mile/Last Mile feeder to transit hub from GeoFenced-zone
- Enable Call Center to book rides for those without Smartphones
- Use paratransit providers' excess off-peak capacity and for accessible rides

Financial Questions

- At what productivity break point would this service be overwhelmed?
8 boardings per service hour?
- Should the subsidy per ride be equal to fixed route?
- Should the fare be higher than fixed route?

Next Steps

- RFP still to be released by purchasing (legal review required for RFPs)
- Call Center contract will have to be extended
- Stay tuned

For more information,

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