

CUSTOMER STORY

Roundtrip reduces ride wait times drastically for 11,000 paratransit trips in Richmond, VA with GRTC

Each year, roughly 9.8% goes to paratransit amounting to about \$5.75 billion of the total expenditure on public transportation, (APTA). In 2013, Approximately 223 million paratransit trips took place throughout the year (APTA). In 2017, Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC) partnered with Roundtrip to launch CARE On-Demand. The first of its kind, CARE On-Demand offers the paratransit community in Richmond same-day, non-stop, on-demand rides while subsidizing costs for the passenger. To date, Roundtrip has delivered 11,000 rides while providing cost savings of over \$100,000 to the system.

INTRODUCTION

GRTC is the primary public transportation provider for the Richmond, Virginia region. The company is a not-for-profit public service corporation jointly owned by the City of Richmond and Chesterfield County in Virginia. Currently, GRTC operates 37 local routes and 10 express routes that provide transit service within the City of Richmond, Henrico County, and a small portion of Chesterfield County—a service area that accounts for more than 8 million passenger rides yearly. In addition to traditional fixed-route service, GRTC Transit System's CARE services provide origin-to-destination services under the guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for the citizens of the Richmond Region. CARE Programs provide curb-to-curb paratransit services to individuals with disabilities who may not be reasonably able to use GRTC fixed route bus services.

CHALLENGE

Over the past decade, while overall public transportation ridership is down, paratransit demand has gone up. Starting in 2013 and growing into 2016, paratransit demand meant the business need had increased but so had the cost. There are a few contributing factors to a rise in paratransit demand with the greatest one being the age wave and the rise in baby boomers and our senior population here in the U.S.



CLIENT:
GRTC

CHALLENGE:
Provide timely, reliable transportation services for the paratransit community in Richmond, VA.

SOLUTION:
Flexible, on-demand paratransit transportation -- that can be booked online or over the phone -- available at a subsidized rate for the rider

IMPACT:

- 11,000 total rides
- Cost savings per trip of ~50%
- \$100,000+ in cost savings to date



GRTC was facing challenges in keeping up with the demand of well over 1000 paratransit trips daily. Customer complaints were on the rise and media coverage spoke of dissatisfaction towards the CARE program's inefficiencies. For the paratransit community in Richmond, getting a ride to where they needed to go had to be scheduled well in-advance and customers were reporting CARE vans were very late or sometimes would not show up at all. Tim Barham, Chief of Transit Operations at GRTC, remarked, "it pretty much hit us in the face. We couldn't keep up with demand with the existing resources. We began looking for more creative ways to address what was going on."

In 2015, Tim led the team in creating the RFP for a new and different innovative, transportation solution. He began researching and leaned into his prior experience with the paratransit division of the Maryland Transit Administration that had used a taxi voucher program and spoke with leaders there and all around the country as well as a rideshare giant and independent taxi companies. After doing all the fact finding and investigating he put together the RFP on behalf of GRTC's CARE program in October of 2016. Key criteria for this RFP included:

- Staying within the spirit of FTA regulations
- Availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles
- Support from a Call Center for members
- Same-day service and vehicles provided within 2 hours of request

Initially, GRTC did not get many responses and of the early applicants -- they found vendors who couldn't support every transport need available or very costly programs. Finally, in 2017, GRTC and Roundtrip met for the first time. Mark Switaj, CEO of Roundtrip was able to speak about the program Roundtrip could offer. The senior staff at GRTC felt it was a good fit, particularly because of Roundtrip's medical transportation background. In addition to meeting all the RFP criteria, GRTC chose to partner with Roundtrip because of aligned values, a focus on technology, and communication/responsiveness. Carrie Rose Pace, Director of Communications at GRTC, expressed, "Both companies are committed to safe and reliable transportation. We all care about providing the same level of access to everyone regardless of their ability." Roundtrip was one of two partners who were awarded this innovative contract to manage the CARE On-Demand program for residents and the program launched in August 2017 with Roundtrip joining in December 2017. In the first 90 days of using Roundtrip, CARE members traveled almost 10,000 miles in over 1500 rides and seamlessly transitioned scheduling services from a phone-based system to an online booking portal.

HOW IT WORKS

With the new GRTC/Roundtrip partnership, CARE customers gained access to a precedentsetting program with greater flexibility in meeting their mobility needs. "CARE On-Demand" enables CARE customers the option to utilize a same-day, direct, non-stop trip. With Roundtrip, CARE customers are able to:

- Call into the Roundtrip Navigation Center to book on-demand rides
- Voicelessly schedule on-demand rides through www.rideroundtrip.com/grtc/
- Receive notifications about their rides 24 hours and 30 min before each ride
- Travel anywhere within the GRTC CARE service area on-demand
- Access a same-day, direct, non-stop trip for an affordable price of \$6



GRTC is now able to:

- Respond faster to same-day CARE needs
- Alleviate service pressure from traditional CARE, enabling those resources to better respond to CARE service demands
- Mitigate CARE call volume

Optimizing Ride Costs

- GRTC charges the CARE member a minimum copay of \$6.
- After that, GRTC pays up to \$15 to subsidize the ride cost.
- This model focuses most on alleviating the burden of cost to the customer

IMPACT

In providing the paratransit with more flexible, reliable, and cost-effective transportation options, partnering with Roundtrip has added value for GRTC to offer a quality level of service at a much lower cost. With the traditional model, the cost per paratransit trip is \$29.00. But with CARE OnDemand powered by Roundtrip, the cost to GRTC is \$15.00. That means that GRTC is able to offer more premium, on-demand services at almost 50% the cost. In 2018 alone, GRTC saw \$90,000 in cost savings. The average monthly savings using Roundtrip for CARE services is \$10,000 which puts overall cost savings well over \$100,000 since launch and about \$40,000 YTD in 2019. Since inception, Roundtrip has increased average monthly ride volume 7x for CARE members seeking more flexible options. Overall, Roundtrip has completed over 11,000 rides for GRTC CARE members. Some CARE members use Roundtrip services every day to get to work and to run their regular errands like heading to the grocery store or the pharmacy. Other CARE Commented members use Roundtrip for social and recreational purposes like going to the movies or the mall. Both Roundtrip and GRTC are extremely excited to be addressing social determinants of health and overall well-being for the paratransit community in Richmond. Now, CARE members can get exactly where they need to go with an affordable, reliable, flexible option that reports over 98% on-time arrivals. Carrie Rose-Pace explains, "Roundtrip makes it easier and more convenient to make trips that are more spontaneous instead of having to plan it so far ahead of time. I also like that Roundtrip offers a phone and online booking service for a variety of users." Roundtrip has continued to receive positive feedback from the program and plans to expand in 2018.

THE FUTURE

Looking towards the years to come, both Carrie and Tim see a growing demand for microtransit, on-demand and automated services. Upon partnering with Roundtrip, Tim recalls, "What struck me was what Roundtrip was doing with technology and the app. I saw value in giving customers the option and even offering discounts to customers using the app. As we move forward, microtransit and self-driver vehicles are becoming more prevalent from the tech side of transportation. Finding partners who are committed to innovation is essential as the transportation industry continues to evolve. Roundtrip's technology is on the cutting-edge."

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-Tim Bartham, VP of Transit Operations, GRTC