

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL MEMORANDUM

Date: June 8, 2021

To: Honorable City Council
c/o City Clerk, Room 395
Attention: Committee Chair

From: Seleta J. Reynolds, General Manager 
Department of Transportation

Subject: **LANOW PILOT PROGRAM TWO-YEAR EXTENSION (CF #19-1519)**

SUMMARY

The City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) paused the LAnow Pilot Micro On-Demand Transit Service program on March 30, 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. LADOT is preparing to restore all transit services to pre-pandemic levels starting in August, 2021, and seeks a two-year extension of the LAnow pilot program beginning September 7, 2021 in order to resume service and complete the pilot.

RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council, subject to the approval of the Mayor:

AUTHORIZE the LADOT General Manager to extend the LAnow pilot program for two years from September 7, 2021 through September 8, 2023.

BACKGROUND

On October 26, 2018, the City Council approved the Transit Service Analysis (TSA) recommendations that included a pilot on-demand microtransit service in West Los Angeles (CF #18-0244). The TSA identified West Los Angeles as an area with unmet transit needs that could not support a fulltime DASH route. LADOT began the LAnow one-year pilot of on-demand microtransit service on March 11, 2019.

On February 12, 2020, Council directed LADOT to extend the pilot program from May 1, 2020, through April 30, 2021. The approved program budget also included funds to upgrade the LAnow software and mobile application from DemandTrans, Inc. to Via Transportation, Inc. (VIA).

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Mayor Garcetti issued a “Safer at Home” emergency order on March 19, 2020. Due to decreased ridership and to ensure passenger safety, LADOT suspended the LAnow service on March 30, 2020. As a result, LADOT did not execute the second-year pilot authorization, and on April 30, 2021, the approved time period for the second-year pilot ended.

DISCUSSION

Prior to the pandemic, LAnow microtransit provided service to the Mar Vista, Venice, Del Rey, and Palms areas of the Los Angeles Westside. Service operated Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. with

six 23-foot cut-away ADA accessible vehicles during peak hours (6 a.m. – 9 a.m., 4 p.m. – 7 p.m.) and four vehicles during off-peak hours (9 a.m. – 4 p.m.). Riders booked trips using a mobile application, website, or call center, and were then picked up and dropped off at virtual pick-up/drop-off locations. LADOT provided over 600 virtual pick-up/drop-off locations throughout the service area, ensuring riders did not walk more than a quarter-mile for pick-up.

LA County moved into the Yellow Tier on May 6, 2021, signifying a minimal county COVID-19 health risk level. In line with the easing of COVID-19 related restrictions and increased public travel, LADOT Transit plans to return all services, including LAnow, to pre-pandemic levels starting in August 2021.

With the relaunch of LAnow, LADOT recommends a two-year pilot extension to allow sufficient time to study post-pandemic travel patterns, grow ridership, and effectively evaluate key performance indicators that will shape recommendations for a permanent microtransit program. To allow for proper outreach and to finalize the data-sharing agreement with Via Transportation prior to the relaunch, LADOT will begin service on September 7, 2021.

To prepare for the second year of the pilot program LADOT will implement the following next steps:

New Technology Provider – Finalize the data-sharing agreement between the City of Los Angeles and the new routing software provider Via Transportation. Facilitate training between the LAnow operator MV, Inc. and Via Transportation.

Continue outreach to employers, residents, and schools - LADOT will continue to meet with employers, schools, and other community groups to promote the service and receive feedback. LADOT will also implement new marketing strategies to increase ridership during the summer and off-peak hours. We will work closely with the local middle and high schools for young adults to use LAnow to get to their summer jobs, take group trips to the beach, and the Palms Expo Line station, which connects to their regional rail networks.

Adjust operating revenue hours, service days, and the service area to match demand - Via Transportation will model and analyze existing service parameters and may adjust the service area and number of vehicle revenue hours to optimize service, vehicle use, and efficiency.

Incorporate findings from LADOT's Changing Lanes study - LADOT will leverage insights and findings from the forthcoming Changing Lanes study on women's transportation needs when identifying potential changes and improvements to the LAnow operating locations, hours, or other project components.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funding for the LAnow program is included in the FY 2020-2021 Proposition A Local Transit Assistance (PALTA) Transit Operations Fund No. 385 Account W431. This project does not create an impact on the City's General Fund budget.

SJR:JK:jf