

Ride Subsidy Program

The purpose of a ride subsidy program is to subsidize the cost of private rideshare trips, such as taxis or Transportation Network Company (TNC) like Uber or Lyft, for pre-qualified groups of people. These programs help to fill small mobility gaps where a shuttle, bus, or other transit service may not be widely available.

What is a ride subsidy?

A ride subsidy is where a pre-qualified group of people will have their private rideshare trip costs partially or fully paid for by a city or public agency. Cities, transit agencies, and social service providers across the US have implemented rideshare subsidy programs that provide fare subsidies to fill mobility needs for people who have difficulty driving a car or using the regular transit system — usually targeting older residents and people with disabilities. In recent years, agencies

have looked to add transportation network companies (TNCs) such as Uber and Lyft to these subsidized ride programs.



Local Bay Area Examples

Little House

A senior center in Menlo Park, subsidizes members' Lyft rides for medical and dental trips. The service area is from Palo Alto to San Mateo.

More information [here](#).

LIFE Eldercare

A non-profit serving seniors, partnered with Lyft to provide scheduling services through a program called VIP ZIP in Alameda County. They offered a live operator to book on-demand rides during weekdays without the need for a smartphone, a difficult activity for many seniors.

More information [here](#).

Who could be Eligible to Participate in a Ride Subsidy Program?

Programs can be designed to target services to a variety of potential participants by incorporating the following factors:

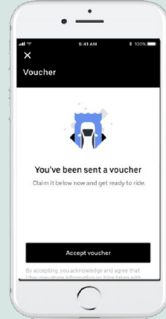
1. Groups of people (e.g. seniors, low-income workers)
2. Trip types (e.g. medical trips, grocery store, commute)
3. Geography (e.g. trips to/from Equity Priority Areas)



Case Study

Concierge Services

To address the needs of people without a smartphone, which includes over 50% of Americans over 65, a third party can be hired to work with Uber/Lyft and provide dispatch and concierge services. Examples of these include 2-1-1 or GoGoGrandparent. Another option is using a non-profit provider such as LIFE Eldercare. These concierge services typically charge a fee either to the user or the program sponsor on a per-minute basis of the ride.



- Alameda County 2-1-1 information [here](#)
- GoGoGrandparent information [here](#)
- LIFE Eldercare information [here](#)

Program Administration

Depending on the organization of the program, administration can be made more or less complex. Users generally need to be individually verified for eligibility, with support from either the jurisdiction or a coordinating organization.

Lower Administration Effort

Contract with a concierge service, whether for-profit or non-profit, to manage the database of eligible users, track the number of rides taken and distribute subsidy to providers in addition to supporting non-smartphone users order rides. Ease administration by defining more open parameters such as allowing broad eligibility to use the program or liberal geographic boundaries for rides.

Higher Administration Effort

Perform administrative work in-house including user eligibility verification and database management. Examples of complex program structures could include tiers of subsidy based on different groups (ex: income), multistep eligibility verification and intricate rules and exceptions for allowed pick-up or drop-off locations.

Equity Considerations

Depending on the intended users, there are multiple usability and equity factors to consider when establishing a program, particularly when focusing subsidy programs on older adults and people with disabilities. Some of these considerations may include incorporating solutions for the following factors:

1. Users with non-foldable wheelchairs. This requires considering the level of service for wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs).
2. Users without a smartphone or are uncomfortable using smartphone apps.
3. Users without a bank account or credit card
4. Users who cannot afford the monthly cost of travel, even partially subsidized
5. Users with high travel needs (ex: medical trips, day care trips)

For more information and case studies see [UC Berkeley ITS Study](#).

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