

City Talk Article for April 10, 2024
City Manager's Office
Robert Weber, transit administrator

City Microtransit to Fill Local Accessible Transportation Gap

As the Transit Administrator, it is not uncommon for me to receive calls from some of our senior residents or those with disabilities inquiring about public transit options within Sedona.

For individuals with disabilities or many older adults who no longer drive, walking a mile to the grocery store, the pharmacy, or the community center is simply not an option. Nor is paying \$40 for an Uber or taxi. Most older adults prefer to "age in place" but a lack of accessible transportation makes this difficult. More than 50 percent of non-driving older adults don't leave home at all most days, often due to a lack of transit options ¹.

Because Sedona's planned Microtransit demand response service (*Sedona Shuttle Connect*) has been delayed by over two years due to post-pandemic bus manufacturing delays, I often refer those callers to Verde Valley Caregivers Coalition (VVCC). VVCC is a local non-profit volunteer organization that provides a wide range of assistive services to its clients - including accessible transportation. However, VVCC's limited local transportation resources are being stretched.

VVCC is providing an ever-increasing number of long-distance trips to their clients to out-of-region healthcare providers. Within the past two years, VVCC has experienced a 300% increase in trip requests to Flagstaff, Prescott, and the Phoenix metro area from its Verde Valley clients who must continue to have access to life-sustaining health care services. This shift in resource allocation has left an accessible transportation gap for local trips within Sedona.

As communities across the nation invest in Microtransit (demand response) services as a shared ride transportation option, they are also finding that these services are a "game changer" for their more vulnerable citizens. Microtransit service allows them to request an accessible curb-to-curb ride directly to their destination in real-time, restoring residents with access to their community for the small price of a discounted bus ticket.

VVCC's Executive Director, Kent Ellsworth is also the Vice Chair of the Sedona Transit Advisory Committee and is eager to collaborate with the city to fully leverage the new Microtransit service to help fill the local transportation gap for our older adults and individuals with disabilities.

I am also happy to report that the new Microtransit buses are finally on the assembly line and assuming that the timeline holds, the Sedona Shuttle Connect service could be operational by this summer.

To sign up for updates on the city's planned Microtransit service and other information on the Sedona Shuttle public transportation system, visit www.SedonaShuttle.com.

¹ AARP Public Policy Institution Survey
