



CASE STUDY



Via to Transit, Seattle

A first-and-last mile service connecting riders to transit hubs in southeast Seattle and Tukwila.

PARTNERS

King County Metro
Sound Transit

FUNDING

City of Seattle
Federal Transit Administration
King County Metro
Sound Transit

LOCATION

Seattle, WA

LAUNCH

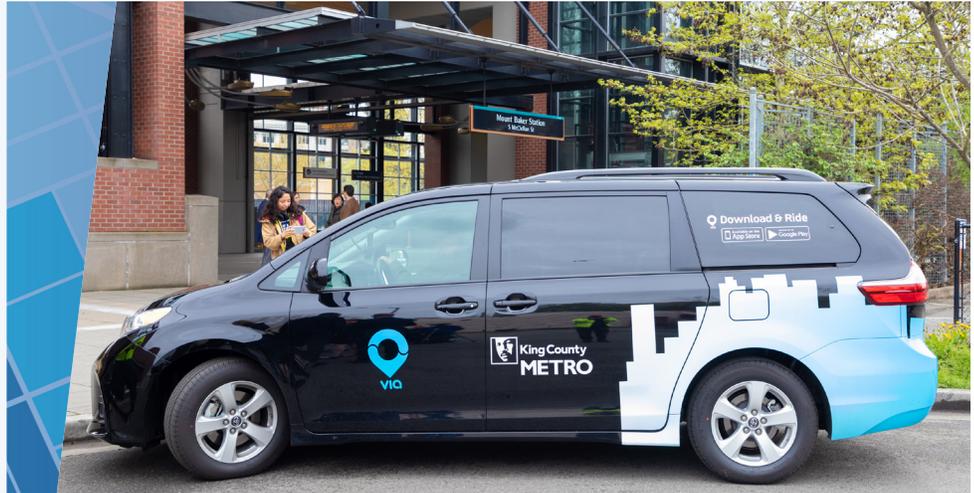
April 2019

GOAL

Provide high-quality transit in low-density, difficult-to-serve parts of the city

USE CASE

Provide a connection between Metro “Link” light rail stations for commuters, residents, and visitors



Overview

In April 2019, Via partnered with King County Metro (Metro) and Sound Transit to launch what has quickly become one of North America’s most successful transit agency-Transportation Network Company (TNC) partnership services. “Via to Transit” provides first- and last-mile solutions in difficult-to-serve in southeast Seattle and Tukwila. Riders use the service to connect to five transit hubs where they can board Sound Transit Link light rail or Metro buses. The service averages 900 rides per weekday, and continues to grow. The service is funded, in part, with a \$1.35m grant from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) as a part of its Mobility on Demand (MOD) Sandbox Demonstration as well as with significant support from the City of Seattle and the transit agencies. King County Metro and Sound Transit are sub-recipients to LA Metro for this grant. With a comparison in two regions – Puget Sound and LA County – this project will test the viability of a partnership with a TNC to increase access to transit.

4.5

AVERAGE WEEKDAY RIDERS PER VEHICLE HOUR

250k

PROJECTED ANNUAL RIDERSHIP

“As we continue to build a city of the future, we are providing new ways for our neighbors to access transit...this new first-last mile connection will help ensure that South Seattle residents have more options for safely and quickly getting to key transit hubs.”

– Seattle Mayor
Jenny A. Durkan

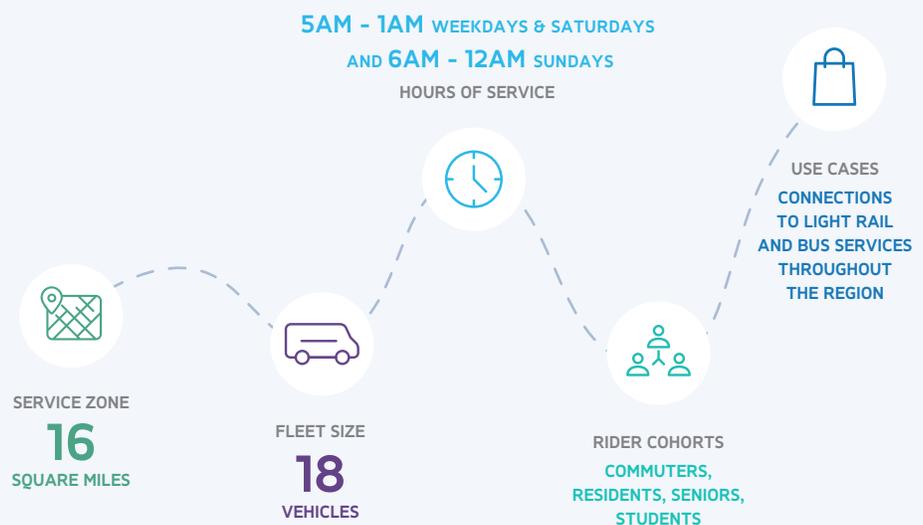
“This project is a boon to Sound Transit’s mission: Connecting more people to more places. The innovative partnership with Via looks to a future where on-demand services work seamlessly with mass transit and builds ridership.”

– Sound Transit Board
Chair, John Marchione

Solution

Via worked closely with Metro and Sound Transit to design a TNC service tailored to their customers’ unique needs. The agencies originally awarded the project to another TNC, but when negotiations failed, Metro contracted with Via acknowledging our reputation as a proven and committed public sector partner.

With Via, Metro has been able to expand access to transit and provide a TNC service that is accessible for the unbanked, and those with low English proficiency, without a smartphone/data plan, and/or requiring Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAVs). In addition, Via’s configurable platform allowed the agencies to require that all trips begin or end at a light rail station, ensuring that riders connect to or from other public transit services. To create a seamless customer experience, Via connects with the regional transit ORCA payment system. Customers can pay for “Via to Transit” rides with the same fare payment card they use for Metro bus, light and intercity passenger rail, and water taxi services in the Puget Sound region.



Results

Since launch, “Via to Transit” has provided over 70,000 rides, enabling vital connections to buses and light rail in the service zone. Ridership is on-track to exceed 250,000 annual passengers. Even more impressively, average wait times have remained around 7-8 minutes; the TNC service provides a quality of service that exceeds most high-frequency bus routes. This pilot offers a blueprint for designing a successful TNC service that is cost-efficient, high quality, and seamlessly integrated into the broader transit network.