Government’s Role in Mobility on Demand
A summary of interviews conducted by the Washington State Department of Transportation

Purpose

At the request of Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Secretary Roger Millar, WSDOT Public Transportation Division staff interviewed industry experts about government’s role in shaping the future of Mobility on Demand (MOD).

This document summarizes findings from interviews of representatives from:

- Public agencies
- Social equity groups
- The private sector
- Academia
- Local, national and international institutions

The findings complement existing bodies of work from organizations including the Federal Transit Administration and the United States Department of Transportation’s Intelligent Transportation Systems Joint Program Office.

Defining Mobility on Demand

Most interviewees described MOD as synonymous with Mobility as a Service (MaaS).

Interviewees articulated MOD’s ability to leverage emerging technologies and services to optimize travel routes and modes while providing a seamless user experience for information, transfers and payment.

A subset of interviewees saw MOD’s services being made available to commuters through a singular cell phone application. Other interviewees had a broader view of potential strategies.

Interviewees also differed on whether MOD included on-demand and multimodal movement of goods and services, or is restricted to personal mobility.
Future of Mobility on Demand

Interviewees characterized their ideal vision for the future of MOD in the following ways:

- People physically and financially transfer seamlessly between public and private modes.
- Public transit, shared mobility and human services transportation are fully integrated.
- Technology and partnerships strengthen (not weaken or replace) public transit.
- Government leverages data from mobility providers to optimize system-wide transportation infrastructure, programs and incentives.
- Information about proximity, cost, estimated time of arrival, weather, carbon emissions and other factors is readily available to users. This information enables users to optimize their travel decisions in real time according to their personal values.
- People are increasingly willing to try new modes.
- Individuals experience freedom of mobility without significant negative impacts on the public good.
- New and emerging technologies and services continue to enter the market and become ubiquitous.
- User costs may be reduced.

Risks and concerns

Interviewees repeated several concerns about MOD, including:

- Lack of integration and turf wars fracture the transportation system.
- Vertically integrated companies or MOD cell phone applications develop non-inclusive suites of services that restrict choices and manipulate consumer behavior in favor of the most profitable modes. Venture capital allows for steep discounts that drive consumers towards modes that conflict with the public good.
- Commodification of transportation exposes consumers to unwelcome increases in advertising and upselling.
• Transportation becomes increasingly economically stratified. Low-income individuals are unable to access the benefits of new transportation investments.

• Wealthy users abandon public transit in favor of marketplace alternatives. Public transit, in turn, suffers from lack of investment and users.

• New technologies and services like autonomous vehicles encourage the use of single occupancy vehicles, increasing carbon emissions and congestion.

**Recommended role of government**

Interviewees identified four key roles for government to ensure that MOD has a positive impact on the social good:

1. **Establish a vision and goals**
   
   Align the public and private sectors by establishing clear values for MOD. Suggested values include:
   
   - Accessibility
   - Safety
   - Equity
   - Affordability
   - Reduced congestion
   - Decreased trip time
   - Carbon reductions
   - Reduced vehicle ownership

2. **Provide a regulatory framework**
   
   - Mandate data sharing and standardization. Create a protected clearinghouse for mobility data and transactions that is not subject to public disclosure.
   
   - Provide market conditions that encourage innovation and experimentation.
   
   - Standardize policies across jurisdictions.
   
   - Deepen the scope of public-private partnerships while ensuring that investments remain accessible for all. Develop clear criteria for public investments.
3. **Mitigate risk**

- Promote a transit-centric approach. MOD should bring people to high-capacity backbone systems.
- Promote the public good through incentives and disincentives.
- Be proactive in identifying and mitigating potential threats without stifling innovation.
- Support sustainable business models.

4. **Maximize the capacity of transportation infrastructure**

- Invest in improved public transit infrastructure. Apply new technologies and services to public transportation.
- Invest in improved infrastructure for non-drive-alone modes such as protected bike lanes, sidewalks, parking for scooters and transfer locations.
- Leverage data from providers in decisions around street design, curb management and regulatory enforcement.
- Plan for continued changes such as decreased need for parking, increased loading zones, and the decline of brick and mortar retail stores.

**Contact**

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Attachment: Interview List

- Ted Bailey, Cooperative Automated Transportation Program Manager, Washington State Department of Transportation
- Abby Chazanow, Transportation Planner, Mobility Innovation, Sound Transit
- Ray Deardorf, Senior Planning Manager, Washington State Ferries
- Celeste Gilman, Deputy Director, Regional Transit Coordination Division, Washington State Department of Transportation
- Allen Greenberg, Policy Analyst, Federal Highway Administration
- Ali Hajbabaie, Assistant Professor, Washington State University
- Mark Hallenback, Director of Washington State Transportation Center, University of Washington
- Dave Janis, Brand Event Lead, Lime
- Niklas Kviselius, Manager, New Mobility, Translink
- Mamie Marcus, Director of Programs, Challenge Seattle
- Don MacKenzie, Assistant Professor, University of Washington
- Chris Murray, President and Chief Executive Officer, Kapsch
- Chris O’Claire, Assistant General Manager, Planning and Customer Services, King County Metro
- Mike Rimoin, Mobility Manager, Reach Now
- Patty Rubstello, Assistant Secretary of Urban Mobility and Access, Washington State Department of Transportation
- Hester Serebrin, Policy Director, Transportation Choices Coalition
- Lilly Shoup, Senior Director of Policy and Partnerships, Lyft
- David Straus, Executive Director, Association for Commuter Transportation
- Shannon Walker, New Mobility Strategic Advisor, City of Seattle
- Michelle McKendric, Senior Executive Assistant, Pierce Transit
- Phil Winters, Transportation Demand Management Program Director, Center for Urban Transportation Research

WSDOT Public Transportation Division staff contacted additional thought leaders for interviews. Due to scheduling issues, these representatives were not included in this memo.