“If we can empower them, there is no limit to what we can do in mobility.”
When the former Governor of Washington State Christine Gregoire helped to launch ITS America’s Mobility on Demand (MOD) Alliance on April 4, she was speaking about the private companies, public sector entities, transportation sector workers, and ultimately the traveling public who, together, are in the midst of transforming how we think about transportation.

Led by MOD Alliance Co-Chairs Roger Millar, Secretary of Transportation of the Washington State Department of Transportation and Chris Murray, President & CEO, Kapsch North America, more than 120 public, private and non-profit sector attendees gathered to both dive into how the dynamic, evolving space of new forms of mobility are reshaping how people, data and freight move and to help set the stage for how the MOD Alliance can help tackle the opportunities and challenges to fully realize the benefits of MOD.

As Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Senior Transportation Analyst and key MOD advocate Danyell Diggs outlined, MOD is a vision for an integrated network of safe, carefree, and reliable transportation options that are available to all.

Integrated

From a customer perspective, integrated means that a traveler could start their morning by taking a ride-hail or rideshare to the light rail, train to their stop, scooter to their office and then pick up a car share later that evening to drive home using an Express Lane. It could mean seamlessly planning that trip on a single application, being able to choose and book different modes of transportation and pay for the entire experience through a single platform.

Integrated also means enabling transportation and mobility operators (both public and private) to fully leverage all available assets cooperatively to deliver infrastructure and data as a service, whether for their customers or their cargo. It means that the public and private sectors are sharing meaningful data, both in real-time and historic, that enables regional and even joint decision-making about how to better operate and manage the railways, roadways, fleets such as delivery trucks, buses, bikes or scooters and transportation assets like curb space, parking and mobility hubs.
Most important, however, is ensuring that no person is left behind in this surge of new mobility options. “This is not just about deploying technology. We must focus on equity and privacy. Mobility cannot harden the division of opportunity; it must raise all boats.” These thoughts from Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan weren’t just the perspective of a Washington region whose advanced MOD collaborations were showcased at the MOD Alliance Launch Forum. Policy issues including social equity, serving persons with disabilities, addressing potential workforce disruption, and privacy and data security were echoed by the many public and private sector executives.

The goals for the mobility experience are for the traveler to feel both safe and carefree. Attendees spent the half-day session starting to tackle some of the challenges and issues that would impact building that carefree experience both for the customer and the providers. Panels and interactive sessions with the attendees addressed issues of scale and replicability for MOD, the cultural shift in the public and private sectors necessary to advance MOD, how the public interacts and is aware of MOD, what defines and should be included as MOD and how we create a viable public and private marketplace for MOD.
LAUNCH INSIGHTS

How do we create scale and replicability for MOD? What conditions need to be in place to move past pilots to create seamless mobility?

- Put travelers at the center of the solution
- Focus on distinct solution/outcome (don’t boil the ocean)
- Base on a sustainable business/economic model
- Build strong political will to address difficult conversations
- Establish grants to get the ball rolling
- Establish standards and protocols that enable data sharing and interoperability between systems, including payment systems
- Establish widespread public private partnerships
- Conduct widespread public education and ensure inclusivity and equity access
- Add privacy safeguards

“AS WE’VE IMPLEMENTED MOBILITY ON DEMAND, WE HAVE BEEN THROUGH A SERIES OF STAGES. MOD 1.0 – WHEN YOU LAUNCH FIRST AND BEG FORGIVENESS LATER, THE PUBLIC MIGHT LOVE THE SERVICES, BUT SOME CAN’T PARTICIPATE, FOR INSTANCE, OUR DISABLED OR UNDERBANKED. THE TRANSPORTATION CONVERSATION THEN GETS DISPLACED BY LARGER TECH/HOUSING/EQUITY ISSUES.

MOD 2.0 – PERMITS ARE AN EVOLUTION. WE ARE LEARNING NOW TO ASK FOR DETAILS FROM OUR PRIVATE PARTNERS ON WHAT WE ARE GETTING FROM THE TRIPS, FOR PLANNING, CURB MANAGEMENT ETC.

MOD 3.0 – COOPERATION WILL BE NECESSARY FOR THE EMERGING MOBILITY FRAMEWORK INCLUDING CONGESTION PRICING, TAXING MODELS FOR SOLO VERSUS SHARED TRIPS, HOW TO ENABLE PUBLIC HEALTH AND EQUITABLE ACCESS PRIORITIES AND HOW TO BRING A DEEP COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT.”

Tilly Chang, Executive Director, San Francisco County Transportation Authority
LAUNCH INSIGHTS

What is the cultural shift in public agencies and private companies necessary to increase awareness of and enable the scale and replicability of MOD?

- Become less risk averse and learn how to manage risk
- Source solutions and ideas from outside the agency and industry
- Reorient training to develop critical thinking skills at all levels
- Alignment of vision, objectives, values
- Trusted data collaborative, sharing data cross jurisdictional and public/private boundaries
- Public needs to communicate value proposition around data needs. Why and what problem is being solved? What specific data? Private sector needs to be more clear about what data is and isn’t available and why.
- Regional cross functional teams including elected officials
- Shift from car culture in the community
- Shift in mindset from system focus to customer need focus
- Shift away from adversarial relationship between public and private companies to private AND public
- **Need to shift from an ego-system of silos to an ecosystem based on trust and collaboration. The common win-win vision of public and private sectors needs to be drilled down. If cities fail and if mobility fails, then we all fail.**
- Need to increase risk tolerance at the public sector to adjust/appropriate levels to facilitate the speed of deployment that is needed in the current environment
- Need for minimum viable policy for mobility objectives (not the whole ocean)
- Move away from project-based planning and financing to outcome-based that is mode/capital/operation agnostic, shifting from project procurement to mobility as a service

In Seattle, private sector CEOs have made a five-year investment to reduce commuter trips. This complements a Washington State law which requires that businesses help give people choices in how they commute.

Between the public and private sectors, MOD in the Seattle region includes integration of fare services and use of right of way, first/last mile pilots, efforts by private companies to provide their own mobility services (apps, shuttles) and include transportation as part of employee benefit packages, integration between land and ferry services, and a public, private, academia mobility innovation center. There is a keen focus on issues of equity, accessibility, universal design, workforce and expansion of mobility services to suburbs.

Today, only 25% of Seattle commuters are single occupant.

“One of the goals of Challenge Seattle is to serve as a champion for risk taking, working with the public sector on how to move forward. You’re not succeeding if you’re not failing.”

Mamie Marcuss, Director of Programs, Challenge Seattle
LAUNCH INSIGHTS

Does the public need to know about Mobility on Demand? Should they care or do they just need to experience it? How should we educate the public and who should do it – the public or the private sector?

- The public cares about MOD, but they talk in different terms and don’t know it as MOD. That’s okay. We need to understand what they are saying, not require they understand our lingo. Should they care? Yes, for many reasons discussed: equity and accessibility, including rural access.
- How should we talk to the public?
  - First listen and understand their needs and questions. Quality of life is key. Everyone sees their “individual” journey versus “our” journeys. We need to ask them, where are their problems with access and what their experiences in transportation are.
  - Second, we all need to engage with the traveler together (public and private sector) by reducing the boundaries between public versus private in how we talk about this. We cannot have boundaries there the same way we do in having our travelers use multiple apps. How should we engage the public?
- Ultimately, it also comes down to speaking with action, with a unified voice.

What is MOD? Is there rural MOD, do we consider tolling, congestion pricing, connected vehicle technologies, freight movement as part of MOD?

- Rural MOD is important, but instead of First Mile/Last Mile it is First 50 Miles/Last 50 Miles to connect users to the existing transportation system. It requires different solutions. In theory there is no difference between rural versus urban. But in practice, technology, issues of financial viability and other factors made application of MOD very different in those areas. But we will need to define guardrails on what’s included. State and/or regional involvement is critical.
- Yes, freight movement should be counted. There are creative opportunities exist to combine trips carrying people as well as goods.
- It’s important to explicitly connect how on demand freight mobility connects rural and urban areas, for instance getting goods to market or resources to towns.
- Could use an app to help us understand the same issues around movement of goods as around movement of people. We should daylight the societal costs of transportation for those who want to understand them so they can make more informed decisions about what day a package arrives. Not everything needs to be the same day. Package pickup locations like Amazon Locker could be another way to consolidate trips and reduce VMT.
WHAT DO WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT EACH OTHER TO MAKE MOD WORK

PRIVATE

We recognize that the difference between businesses and government is that we define a very discrete problem statement that our businesses work to solve. Government can’t do that.

While we move towards different mobility strategies, it is not often that we find dedicated resources in the public agencies who understand the technologies and can be active partners with us.

The public sector asks us to be interoperable but are not often interoperable themselves.

PUBLIC

The biggest challenge with MOD is how integrated new forms of mobility into legacy systems like trip routing and fare systems. We need MOD that considers integration with legacy systems.

It doesn’t matter how much technology might hit the roads, it won’t matter if people don’t have access to order their mobility choices. We are focused on how and where we allocate our funds with an equity overlay.

Even where one agency has an MPO, transit and traffic ops, integration is difficult due to proprietary systems and data.

If part of MOD is private sector mobility services, how do we create a system that not just improves the safety, accessibility and ease of travel in our communities but also supports a robust private marketplace (aka – how can they be profitable?).

- By creating a level playing field so that there is fair competition
- Be sensitive to where private sector doesn’t make money
- Use technology “gain share” where the public entity is assured baseline revenue, but anything above that is shared
- The 80/20 rule must flip to 80% platform specific solutions with 20% regionalized solutions
- Improved access, ongoing proactive collaboration, streamlined procurement
- Well-defined business rules, data framework defined and public agency contributes
- Government takes responsibility for payment mechanisms
- A system that respects IP
- Move fast
- Provide universal payment methods
- Change traditional budget from caps to support MOD/MaaS models
- Consistent application of regs and policy direction
- Working together to develop subsidies where private sector can provide more productivity/equity but still is profitable (e.g. bike share everywhere)
- Stop thinking they are just in the business of bridges and roads
- Endorse private sector initiatives
- Share user databases