

MEETING DATE: March 21, 2018

ITEM # 22

SUBJECT:

**CONSIDERATION OF THE WEST SACRAMENTO/VIA ON-DEMAND
RIDESHARE PILOT SERVICE FEATURES, BRANDING, AND PROGRESS REPORTING FRAMEWORK**

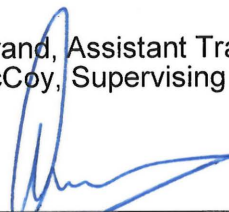
INITIATED OR REQUESTED BY:

[] Council [X] Staff

[] Other

REPORT COORDINATED OR PREPARED BY:

Sarah Strand, Assistant Transportation Planner
Jason McCoy, Supervising Transportation Planner


Denix Anbrah, Director
Public Works Department

ATTACHMENT [X] Yes [] No [] Information [] Direction [X] Action

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this staff report is to provide an update to the City Council on the status of the West Sacramento/Via On-Demand Rideshare Pilot that is currently underway, discuss staff recommendations and obtain approval of key service features, and obtain approval of the proposed framework guiding the subject matter and content for future monthly progress reports to the City Council.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Staff respectfully recommends that the City Council receive staff's presentation on key service features for implementation during the "Initial Launch" (Phase 2) of the West Sacramento/Via On-Demand Rideshare Pilot; and:

- 1) Approve of staff's recommendations regarding key service features, including initial phased launch plan approach, proposed citywide service area, initial fares and hours of operation, service standards (including walk distance and wait times), and age restrictions, and Pilot branding concepts;
- 2) Approve Phase 2 "Initial Launch" of service on May 14, 2018;
- 3) Approve the proposed framework for future City Council progress reports and provide additional content recommendations; and
- 4) Provide feedback and recommendations in identifying key community hubs and potential Pilot partnerships.

BACKGROUND

Over the course of the past year, staff has presented multiple reports to the Transportation, Mobility and Infrastructure (TMI) Commission and City Council to introduce and develop the concept for an on-demand, flexible transportation service aimed at enabling car free living and enhancing mobility for community members underserved by existing public transit. The Pilot Flexible Transportation Service concept, now referred to as the "West Sacramento/Via On-Demand Rideshare Pilot", ("the Pilot") was first presented as a component of the City's broader Mobility Action Plan (MAP) to the TMI Commission on March 6, 2017, and to the City Council on April 19th, 2017. Since then, staff has taken actions to procure a service provider to enable the deployment of a citywide, on-demand rideshare service aimed at reducing vehicle miles travelled (VMT) by providing a viable alternative to driving, and improving access for residents by introducing more sustainable, affordable mode choices. City Council engagement completed and actions taken to-date are as follows:

Meeting	Report Topic/Action Taken
April 19, 2017	Introduced Mobility Action Plan & Pilot On-Demand Flexible Transportation Service. City Council directed staff to release a Request for Proposals.
July 26, 2017	Workshopped conceptual service designs for the Pilot service. City Council Directed Pilot scope to be citywide, encourage pooling, and provide point-to-point service.
August 16, 2017	Presented shortlist of proposals from RFP for the Pilot service. City Council approved staff's recommended shortlist to advance to evaluation and selection.
November 1, 2017	Presented the evaluation panel's top-ranked, recommended firm, Via Transportation Inc. City Council approved the recommendation and directed staff to proceed to contract development.

January 17, 2018	Submitted request for Award of Contract and allocation of funding for contract expenses. Executed contract, approved funding and directed staff to give monthly Council updates.
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Under the executed service contract, Via (contracted under the name NoMad Transit, LLC) will scale to deploy a city-wide, network-optimized, on-demand rideshare service using up to ten (10) donated Mercedes Metris vans driven by locally sourced Transportation Network Company (TNC) driver partners. Users will be able to hail a shared ride on the co-branded Via-West Sacramento service using a smartphone app, or by calling in to book a ride. In the event demand for the service exceeds the Metris fleet supply, Via will be permitted to invite TNC drivers onto the network using their personal vehicles to maintain a high quality of service.

The Pilot will be rolled out in three service phases: **Phase 1**, the preliminary service design, planning and preparation phase wherein the acquisition and customization of all labor, equipment, technology, and materials necessary to launch the service will occur (2-4 months); **Phase 2**, an Initial Launch period (4-6 weeks), wherein service hours may be adjusted over time alongside initial market analysis and promotions of the service; followed by **Phase 3**, the Full Launch period (~11 months), wherein changes to the service parameters would be more limited as the Pilot operated through the remaining term of the contract. Service performance will be continually monitored and reported quarterly; ultimately resulting in a comprehensive Final Performance Evaluation Report, which would be independently completed by the UC Berkeley Transportation Sustainability Research Center (TSRC).

The Pilot is currently in **Phase 1**. This phase is focused on establishing the new service on the ground in West Sacramento, including the localization and customization of Via's proprietary technology allowing it to operate on the local roadway network. Prior to the rollout of the Pilot service, Via is also working to grow the local operations through coordinated outreach to key businesses and stakeholders, driver acquisition, procurement of Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) services, vehicle delivery and branding, and preliminary development of a marketing plan. Phase 1 includes targeted outreach to key stakeholders such as YCTD and the regional Bike Share vendor to identify any possible opportunities to encourage multi-modal linked trips in the City. At this time, a key step in Phase 1 is identifying the key service parameters that will define the Pilot on its first day of service (Initial Launch date).

Staff has been working closely with the Via deployment team to identify important trade-offs related to the service features in order to effectively communicate the rationale for the proposed service design to the TMI Commission and City Council, and in turn facilitate ample opportunities for both governing bodies to provide critical feedback on the potential policy implications of the service as a result. Key discussion topics will be presented by staff for City Council consideration.

ANALYSIS

At this time, staff recommends the following service features, as described below and in staff's presentation. Council feedback will shape the service model that will be deployed on the proposed Initial Launch date of May 14, 2018.

Initial Launch Plan Approach: The Pilot initial launch will cover the City of West Sacramento in full but will operate on slightly limited hours to allow Via to more efficiently use limited resources while building a demand base, collecting early user feedback including customer surveys, and leveraging the branded vehicles as a highly effective marketing strategy. This also allows for data collection and observation of how the Pilot is being used in the first 4 to 6 weeks, after which service hours could be expanded (Phase 3). Staff recommends proceeding with the phased launch approach, pending Council approval.

Initial Hours of Operation: The Initial Launch (Phase 2) is proposed to operate with slightly limited hours Monday through Friday, 7am to 7pm and Saturdays from 9am to 7pm to start. The service is not proposed to operate on Sundays and Holidays at this time. Based on experience in other cities, the Via team hypothesizes that demand will be greatest during weekday commuting hours, but will retain the flexibility to tweak hours of operation to be highly demand responsive. Phase 3 is anticipated to operate Monday through Friday from 7am to 10pm, and Saturday from 9am to 10pm, but may be modified based on actual demand and user feedback during the Initial Launch period, or to accommodate additional City direction. Additional opportunities will be brought to the Commission and Council as data and feedback is collected to discuss opportunities to provide special event service for major trip generators, such as River Cats baseball games at Raley Field, or whether there is sufficient demand to consider introducing weekend "Late-Night" service with slightly higher fares. At this time, staff recommends proceeding with the proposed limited hours for the Initial Launch, with the understanding that staff will return to City Council in advance of

the Full (Phase 3) Launch to discuss any modifications to the anticipated hours of operation moving forward.

Initial Fares: Beginning on the proposed Initial Launch date (May 14, 2018) the proposed fare during the Initial Launch phase of the Pilot is \$3.50 per trip per person. The service will provide nearly door-to-door service for a flat-fare anywhere within the City boundary. The price point for the service may be modified based on demand and customer feedback. Changes to the fare will be made conservatively to support a perception of consistency and reliability, however the Initial Launch phase will also allow the Via team to adjust fares within a range of \$2 to \$5 in order to identify an optimal fare which balances affordability and ridership with financial feasibility. The ultimate fare is subject to Council approval.

Staff recommends proceeding with the \$3.50 fare for the Initial Launch period and will return to Council in advance of the Full Launch to discuss any necessary modifications to the fares, and to discuss additional special fare programs. Specifically, special discounted fares could be developed for certain groups, subject to Council direction (i.e. - \$2 rides for eligible low-income seniors). In addition to purchasing rides on a per-trip basis, a subscription based "ViaPass" will also be considered to encourage consistent ridership, similar to a monthly transit pass.

Service Standards: A critical component of the service which the City must consider is the standard for service, which includes the walk distance and wait time the City deems acceptable for users to access a Via ride after making a ride request. The Via team has proposed high quality service standards when compared with traditional transit, which staff fully endorses and recommends as described below.

Wait Times: Via expects the average wait time for any user of the Pilot to be 6-8 minutes, with 80% of customers expected to be picked up in under 10 minutes and 90% of customers expected to be picked up in under 15 minutes. The Maximum ETA, or the absolute longest amount of time a customer would have to wait for a Via van to arrive after requesting a ride is expected to be 21 minutes, which is anticipated to occur for less than 10% of all customers.

Walking Distance: The longest distance the Via Pilot service would ask a customer to walk to meet the Via van is 1/10 mile, or approximately 500 feet, although most walking distances will be shorter than the maximum and some may even be door-to-door if it is optimal for the network. This distance has been identified as the "sweet spot" for maximum walking distance through experience in other locations.

In addition, staff expects to work closely with the Via team, and with input from the TMI Commission and City Council, to consider defining limited "door-to-door" service areas to serve specific use cases, such as locations where the typical use may have impaired mobility (i.e. - Senior facilities) or for places of business with large parking lots (i.e. - shopping centers, hotels).

Vehicle & Smartphone App Branding: In addition to extensive digital and traditional marketing and outreach strategies, the dedicated Mercedes Metris van fleet will serve as a critical marketing strategy to spur interest in the Pilot service from the community. This will be achieved by creating a visually interesting, recognizable vehicle brand that ignites community curiosity, then provides adequate information for community members to learn more about the service. Simultaneously, the team is seeking to cost effectively brand the ten (10) dedicated vehicles and is therefore limited to some extent in the elaborateness of the design. Alternatives have been presented to the City Council for feedback (See **Attachment 2**, Branding Designs).

Following internal consultation with other City departments, Staff recommends selecting branding design Option 3 (Golden "Swoosh"). There was consensus among staff members that the design is eye-catching, yet retains the official City logo which signals to users that the service is a public transportation option supported by City funds. Option 1 is not recommended as it was not considered by staff to support the City's unique identity or recognizable enough for use as a marketing strategy. Option 2 was not recommended by staff because it eliminates the Tower Bridge graphic from the City logo (as recommended to reduce graphic redundancy) which results in the service appearing less official. However, members of the TMI Commission also commented favorably on the bold bridge design of Option 2.

Staff also recommends using the "West Sacramento On-Demand" naming convention as opposed to using an abbreviation or other service name. The name "West Sacramento On-Demand" would be used both in the App and on the physical vehicles. Staff is requesting approval from the City Council on both the

branding graphics and service name, and welcomes additional suggestions that may be further developed and brought back to the Council.

Community Hubs & Partnerships: Staff has been working closely with Via to begin identifying key community hubs and potential partnerships. Major hubs and destinations would be visually highlighted in the Smartphone Application, and a discounted fare promotion is currently being discussed in coordination with the Yolo County Transportation District (YCTD) which would provide a free/discounted Via or Yolobus ride for Via users transferring to the Yolobus Downtown Shuttle, and vice versa. The intent is to implement the promotion after the Full Launch of service and use it to mutually encourage ridership on both services.

To avoid conflicts with existing fixed route services, the Via vans will be directed to avoid stopping in dedicated bus turn outs during the initial service. Staff is exploring installation of dedicated wayfinding signs to direct passengers to designated Via pick-up/drop-off point at the Transit Center utilizing existing 2-hr on-street parking in front of Los Rios Community College to facilitate curb management and deter conflicts. This promotional model has not been finalized as coordination with YCTD is continuing throughout the remainder of Phase 1 as feedback and alternative ideas are requested. In addition, staff is actively seeking coordination with JUMP, the incoming regional bike share provider, to explore similar co-promotional activities that would encourage linked and active multi-modal trips.

Lastly, the Via team is interested in exploring various partnerships with local businesses and employers. Local businesses could participate by providing a discount on their goods/services for customers who arrive by Via to help alleviate parking demand challenges. Separately, Via is currently developing a corporate portal to allow for major employers to subsidize employees with free or discounted Via fares as part of their Commuter Benefit programs. Staff recommends continued exploration of the community hubs and partnerships described here and requests that the City Council provide additional feedback and direction on these concepts.

Age Restrictions: Per federal law, children between the ages of 13 and 18 will be legally able to use the Pilot service unaccompanied under two conditions: 1) they have the express consent of the parent or guardian; and 2) they are signed up for their own individual Via account in compliance with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). Children under the age of 13 would not be permitted to use the service without a parent or guardian accompanying them on their trip. Staff is requesting approval from the City Council regarding age limitations and requests additional feedback on other potential local restrictions that may be applied to the service.

Subject to Council direction, staff has identified preliminary opportunities for the Pilot Via Rideshare service to support youth mobility, as transportation is a key barrier for many young people to access career and educational opportunities. Young community members may use the service to access River City High School, the Recreation Center, employment opportunities or out of school learning. Additionally, staff has been internally exploring the use of the service to support the transportation of CTE Career Pathways students who are engaged in paid career-ready internships as part of the West Sacramento Home Run initiative to and from their job sites during the summer of 2018. Additional information on this concept will be proposed to the City Council at a later time.

Planned Council & Commission Engagement

Attachment 1 provides a high level overview of the 2018 Council & Commission schedule for the Pilot, including key meetings and reporting milestones. This schedule is subject to minor deviations or with additional direction from the City Council. Per City Council's request, staff will be returning monthly to provide project updates and to allow for additional opportunities to review and consider potential policy implications of the service in greater depths as data from the operational Pilot service is collected and analyzed. Staff also plans on returning regularly to the TMI Commission. Staff proposes that the regular City Council reports include information on the following, as appropriate:

- Work Completed To-Date
- Overview of Ridership Data, Trends & Customer Feedback
- Issues that have arisen/been resolved
- Proposed/Implemented Service Modifications
- Development of Ongoing Marketing/Partnerships
- Quarterly Performance Reports
- Other Topics/Issues, as directed by the City Council

In addition, the City Council requested that staff return to conduct policy workshops on specific topics over the course of the Pilot project. Staff has developed the following list of potential topics for future meetings, submitted for City Council feedback and further direction:

Performance Metrics: Further discuss the goals of the Pilot and how the City will measure "success". While the Pilot may enable reduce VMT in some areas, there may be a net increase in VMT due to providing improved mobility for underserved communities, which often equates to improved access to important community amenities for disadvantaged communities (i.e. seniors, low-income residents). It will be critical for the City Council to provide feedback to assist staff in defining which outcomes of the Pilot will indicate success for West Sacramento.

Marketing Plan: As data and feedback on the Pilot is collected, the service can be better tailored to target key use cases. Staff proposes to return to City Council to present the types of use cases that emerge through the life of the Pilot to better understand who is (or is not) using the service and discuss whether additional marketing efforts or service modifications should be pursued to continue growing ridership from existing users and/or whether efforts should be made to attract new ridership.

Future Costs & Funding: As sufficient data is gathered on ridership and revenue recovery, staff proposes to return to further discuss potential future funding alternatives for how the Pilot may continue in future years, pending satisfactory performance. This could potentially include strategic partnerships with other agencies or businesses. Contingent on demand for the service, the City Council may also be presented with an opportunity to reinvest recovered revenues during the term of the Pilot to support service expansion.

Final Performance Evaluation: The findings from the final performance evaluation report will be brought forward to Council as a workshop to allow the City Council to fully deliberate the impacts of the Pilot service following the 1 year test period. This workshop will determine whether the City elects to continue services with Via.

Mobility Action Plan (MAP) Integration: As data from the Pilot is gathered, staff will propose revisiting implications of the Pilot service for the broader mobility network. As sufficient data becomes available, staff proposes reassessing the existing fixed-route transit network in partnership with YCTD and City Council to identify potential streamlining opportunities. If the City is awarded grant funding from the FY18-19 Caltrans Sustainable Planning Grant Program to fully develop the MAP, staff will further discuss: the role of the Pilot service in the City's future mobility system, linkages with other new and shared mobility options and technologies, and considerations related to curb space and roadway design.

Other Topics/Issues: As directed by the City Council.

Staff is requesting that City Council identify any specific questions/topics related to the Pilot that they would like for staff to present/report on at future Council meetings, but are not reflected here. Council is also asked to indicate any specific meeting date or timeframe in which they'd like a report to be brought back, as appropriate.

Environmental Considerations

On January 17, 2018, the City Council approved a Categorical Exemption for this project under Class 6, Guidelines Section 15306 (Information Collection) of CEQA since the Pilot will focus on data collection, research and evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource and will inform the City's consideration of approving and funding the service for additional years. A Notice of Exemption has been submitted to the County Clerk's Office.

Commission Recommendation

On March 5, 2018, staff presented a report in substantially the same form to the Transportation, Mobility & Infrastructure (TMI) Commission. The TMI Commission moved in support of staff's recommendations, with the following comments requested for City Council consideration:

- Support phased launch approach.
- Community partnerships could include promotions and outreach with Raley Field, Chambers of Commerce, BBCAN, River City High School, and State workers.
- Monitor demand and customer service to consider expanding Late-Night Service, Special Events Service, and/or consider expanding to one or more drop-off points in Downtown Sacramento during the Pilot to accommodate demand outside the City of West Sacramento.

- Option 2 "Bridge" branding was preferred by Commissioners that commented on the design, but expressed that the redundancy of two bridges in both the City logo and the large Bridge graphic should be avoided. As a result, the city logo "bridge" was removed, limiting the graphic in Option 2 to the larger "bridge" over the side-rear of the vehicle for Council consideration.
- Ensure that vehicle design conveys the message that the Pilot is a City endorsed and funded program.
- Continue exploring opportunities to link multi-modal trips (i.e. – add bike racks, partner with Bike Share).
- Make sure to do ample outreach to older adult community and consider translating materials to other languages (including Russian and Spanish) where feasible.

Strategic Plan Integration

This project advances the Strategic Plan Management Agenda item, "Mobility Action Plan."

Alternatives

The Council's primary alternatives are summarized below:

- 1) Receive staff's presentation on the proposed features of the West Sacramento/Via On-Demand Rideshare Pilot and wholly approve of staff's recommendations regarding key service features, branding, an Initial Launch date of May 14, 2018, and proposed framework for future City Council progress reports.
- 2) Receive staff's presentation on the key features of the pending West Sacramento/Via On-Demand Rideshare Pilot, and approve staff's recommendation with specific alterations to the service parameters, branding, framework for progress reporting, and/or launch date proposed by staff.
- 3) Receive staff's presentation on the key features of the pending West Sacramento/Via On-Demand Rideshare Pilot, and decline to endorse staff's recommendations.
- 4) Decline to receive staff's presentation and request that this item be rescheduled for a future meeting.

Alternative 1 is staff's recommended action, however Staff is prepared to follow direction under Alternative 2, subject to additional budgetary impact analysis that would need to accompany the Commission's recommendation to Council. Alternatives 3 or 4 would hinder staff's ability to incorporate TMI Commission feedback in advance of the March 21 City Council meeting and could result in a delay in the launch of the Pilot service.

Coordination and Review

This report was prepared by the Traffic and Transportation Division of the Public Works Department in coordination with the Via Transportation, Inc. project team and other City departments. Vehicle branding alternatives were developed in coordination with the Communications and Media Division of the City Manager's Office. Components of the Community Hubs and Partnerships section were coordinated with the Yolo County Transportation District.

Budget/Cost Impact

This project has an approved budget of \$749,000 funded by a \$149,999 SACOG TDM Innovation Grant and a Council allocation of \$599,001 from using local Transportation Development Act (TDA) funds [a combination of State Transit Assistance (STA) and Local Transportation Funds (LTF)].

Of the total project, roughly \$460,000 is obligated for purchased transportation services, which covers the subsidization of the cost to provide flat-rate rides anywhere in the City by paying for variable driver-partner wages, fuel and overhead for the hours the service it is in operation. Should the proposed service parameters be altered dramatically (i.e. – increasing to 24 hour service, or reducing fares to \$1), it would expend funds at a faster rate than planned, and could have ripple effects on the ability to: operate the Pilot for the full year, provide as many rides, or recoup revenues for reinvestment into additional service. Dependent upon proposed alterations to the recommended service parameters, staff will need to conduct a budget impact analysis in conjunction with the Via team to fully understand potential trade-offs.

ATTACHMENT(S)

- 1) 2018 Council & Commission Schedule Overview – West Sacramento/Via On-Demand Rideshare Pilot
- 2) Vehicle and Application Branding Design Concepts

2018 COUNCIL & COMMISSION SCHEDULE OVERVIEW VIA ON-DEMAND RIDESHARE PILOT

PROJECT PHASE	STARTING	ENDING	PROJECT PHASE	SUBMIT BY	COUNCIL
CONTRACTING & NEGOTIATIONS	10/01/2017	01/05/2018	QUARTERLY REPORT #1	08/06/2018	09/19/2018
CITY CONTRACT EXECUTED	01/08/2018	01/17/2018	QUARTERLY REPORT #2	11/16/2018	12/05/2018
SACOG GRANT AGMNT	12/05/2017	02/23/2018	QUARTERLY REPORT #3	02/28/2019	03/2019
PHASE 1 PRELIMINARY WORK	02/13/2018	05/13/2018	FINAL PERFORMANCE REPORT	07/2019	08/2019
PHASE 2 INITIAL LAUNCH	05/14/2018	06/15/2018	<div> <input type="checkbox"/> TMI Commission Meeting <input type="checkbox"/> Council Meeting (Regular Update) <input type="checkbox"/> Council Meeting (Workshop) </div>		
PHASE 3 FULL LAUNCH	06/18/2018	05/07/2019			

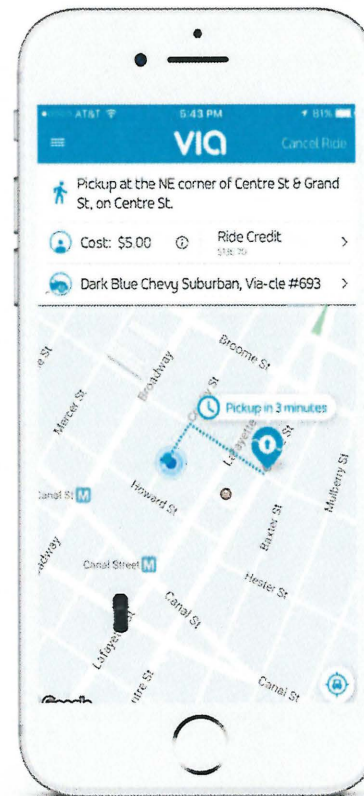
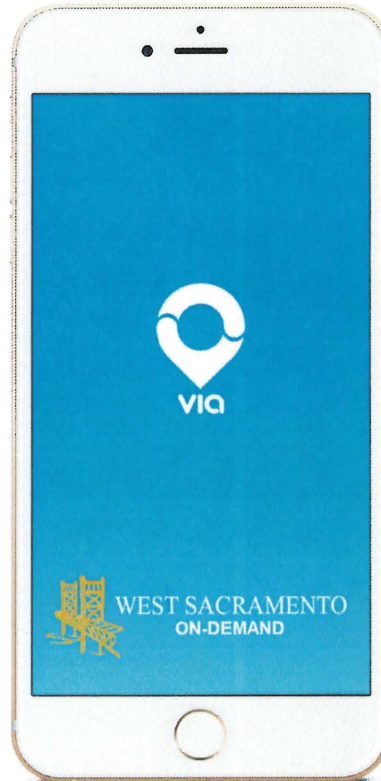
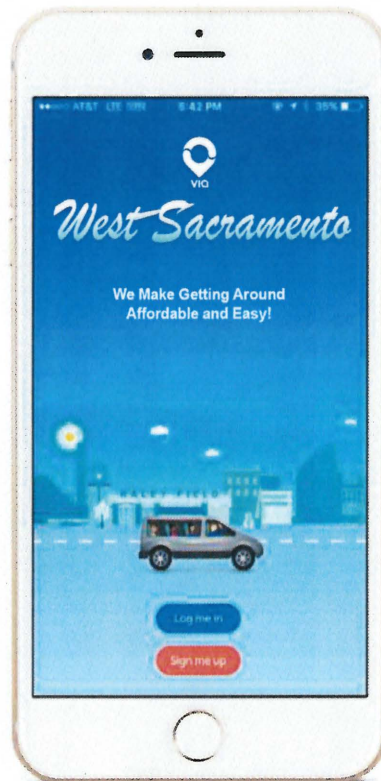
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City Holidays/Closures

WEST SACRAMENTO ON-DEMAND

App design

Proposed Co-Branding



WEST SACRAMENTO ON-DEMAND

Vehicle branding

Option 1- Original



WEST SACRAMENTO ON-DEMAND

Vehicle branding

Option 2 – Bridge



WEST SACRAMENTO ON-DEMAND

Vehicle branding

Option 3 – Golden “Swoosh”

