Andrew Carpenter ([00:00:00](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=0.48)):

Hello, everyone. Welcome to season three of Next Stop, Transit Tech with the National Center for Applied Transit Technology. We have a great season of content in store for you all as always. My name is Andrew Carpenter. I'm the director of N-CATT.

([00:00:22](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=22.32)):

We first have a couple of staff changes. Marcela Moreno, who led the podcast in the first two seasons is now a transportation planner with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments here in DC. We'll hopefully get her into the studio in the meantime, but we're also excited that we have a new staff member, Erich Lange.

 ([00:01:11](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=71.25)):

My name is Erich Lange. I'm stepping into Marcela's very big and impressive shoes, as senior program associate here with N-CATT. I come by way of another technical assistance center, Transit Planning for All, hosted by the Community Transportation Association of America where I've been helping work on inclusive planning for older adults and people with disabilities.

Andrew Carpenter ([00:01:37](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=97.5)):

And you also have some rural transit experience, right?

Erich Lange ([00:01:40](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=100.53)):

What brought me to transportation was I was working in public health in Western Colorado, a really rural, frontier area of Western Colorado, for about five years and realized that a lot of the disparities and social service gaps that existed were a result of lack of transportation, so I jumped into work in regional transportation there which led me to Washington, DC, where I'm in graduate school and luckily found CTAA.

 ([00:02:17](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=137.91)):

It's exciting to have Erich with us, and then we're also excited to have our friends from the Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency, or HIRTA. They are always doing great work, so we're excited to get to talk about one of their many, many projects that they're working on.

([00:02:43](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=163.38)):

In August [2022], HIRTA launched a new on-demand transit service across seven counties of rural Iowa. On-demand transit in rural areas is still a tricky prospect, and so we're excited to see how this goes. It's exciting to see this development since so many areas lack on-demand transportation options. Many people in these areas have to book well in advance, so sometimes 24 hours, in some cases, 72 hours ahead of the trips that they want to take. It removes a lot of flexibility from people's lives, and so implementing an on-demand system could really change how people get around in rural parts of the country. This is a great opportunity for passengers as well as for agencies such as HIRTA.

([00:03:48](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=228.57)):

Julia Castillo is HIRTA's executive director. Brooke Ramsey is HIRTA's business manager.

([00:04:05](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=245.55)):

Julia and Brooke, thanks for joining us. We're excited to learn more about this service, but, first, could you both introduce yourselves?

Julia Castillo ([00:04:15](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=255.24)):

I'm Julia Castillo, and I'm the executive director of HIRTA. I've been in this position for 12 years, and knowing that we provide a service that gives people the freedom and independence to move around their own communities is what makes this such an exciting position for me. We have a very forward-thinking team who really share a passion for transit. It's that dedication to innovation that allows us to think big and find ways around and through barriers. Even though we are a smaller rural transit agency, we really do try to find ways to do big things. I'm hoping this gives other people some type of inspiration for them to know that they can be small and do big things as well.

Brooke Ramsey ([00:05:06](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=306.06)):

My name is Brooke Ramsey. I've worked for Julia for just a little over 12 years now. Similar to Julia, I think not only myself, but the majority of our staff, if not all of our staff, are passionate about working in transportation and working at HIRTA because, no matter who you are or what your role is here, at the end of the day, whether you're the accountant or a receptionist, it all helps get people access to every facet of life that you need.

([00:06:02](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=362.97)):

Erich, I really appreciate your background and some of the things you talked about. It fits into some of the work that we're doing not only on the on-demand service that we're talking about today, but with a lot of our other projects as well. Just imagining the access that transportation gives people, you think about being able to get in your car and drive somewhere, the things that you need to do, whether it's getting a haircut or getting groceries, getting education, all of those things are able to be done using public transportation, Sorry. That's my passion.

Andrew Carpenter ([00:06:36](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=396.96)):

Nothing to be sorry about there.

 ([00:06:44](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=404.4)):

We really want to focus in on the new on-demand transportation service that you've started. Could you tell us a little bit more about your service area and that new service in particular?

Julia Castillo ([00:06:57](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=417.72)):

Our service area, we serve seven counties in Central Iowa. We are unique in that we surround the Des Moines metro area. We have those seven counties, so we're not a clump together of counties. We cover about 4,150 square miles of area, which is pretty impressive and, in that, the population within those seven counties is about 365,000 people. There is a lot of diversity. We have very, very rural places that we serve, as well as we are integrated into some of the smaller communities. We contract a paratransit service with CyRide, who is the City of Ames University fixed-route service, so we have a lot of different areas and diversity that we serve.

Brooke Ramsey ([00:08:05](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=485.25)):

Some of our communities might be less than a thousand in population and others are part of the greater Des Moines metro with a population at 20,000 or, ~~j~~ust a little over that 20,000 threshold, like Julia mentioned, working in the City of Ames where the population is over 70,000. It's a pretty diverse community not only in population, but in what that population looks like.

Andrew Carpenter ([00:08:40](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=520.41)):

Two questions to expand on that is, first, do you do trips into Des Moines as well and then, the second one, is do you stage your vehicles throughout this whole donut or do you work out of a central area?

Brooke Ramsey ([00:09:07](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=547.83)):

Yes, we do provide trips into Des Moines. We really started that several years ago due to the need to access specialty care in smaller communities not having access to things like cancer treatments. Some communities have no dialysis clinic. In fact, we just had a dialysis clinic in a city with a population of about 7,500 people. They closed due to low patient census. However, that left three people who were driving themselves when it was just in-town treatments to now needing access to drive 40 minutes each direction. They just can't physically do that, so needing to be creative in how we can provide that service and knowing that the access to care is imperative for quality of life.

Andrew Carpenter ([00:10:03](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=603.36)):

Since you're kind of in a donut around Des Moines, how do you make that happen?

Brooke Ramsey ([00:10:17](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=617.37)):

We do have a centralized office that is actually part of the Des Moines metro. We do have a couple of vehicles here, but the majority of the fleet is stored throughout various locations in our service area. We have vehicles, in total, housed in 11 different locations.

Erich Lange ([00:11:01](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=661.44)):

Would you be able to walk us through as a passenger how they might access this service?

Brooke Ramsey ([00:11:17](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=677.13)):

As Julia mentioned, our service area is pretty large. We actually have two different area codes. A long time ago, we just decided the best method would be to have a toll-free number that we advertised so customers can call our toll-free number to schedule advanced transportation or even on-demand service as long as we have the capacity to provide it. We also have folks who email their trips in and we have a smartphone application that they can use to schedule and manage their own transportation as well.

Andrew Carpenter ([00:12:05](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=725.94)):

With introducing this on-demand version of your service, how has the experience changed for passengers?

Julia Castillo ([00:12:28](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=748.56)):

One of the things that was really important for us and how we got to this particular point was that people could live their lives more spontaneously so they didn't have to wait 24 hours in advance to call us. In putting this new on-demand service in place, even though there has been some challenges and some hiccups along the way, which there is anytime you change especially your software or change the type of service you do, we have seen a lot of compliments come in about the service, about the app, and we have seen our ridership increase. Those are three things that we have been able to look at that says, even though there has been some challenges, we know we're on the right path to get to where we want to be. We're still very early into this. It's just about three months. We've learned a lot, I think our customers have learned a lot, our internal staff has learned a lot, but I think we are starting to hit the goals that we had created for going to an on-demand service.

Andrew Carpenter ([00:13:49](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=829.86)):

Could you go into what those goals were?

Julia Castillo ([00:13:54](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=834.12)):

They were to allow people to schedule their trips easier and manage their own trips so they didn't have to call and speak to somebody. We wanted to make sure that we were able to tap into those people that were caregivers. A lot of times, they are really busy during the day and they don't have time, and then we would find that they would forget a trip, "Oh, I forgot to call 24 hours in advance, and somebody's got a doctor's appointment right now," and so allowing them to be able to use the app or to email us was very important to us as well. We have noticed that people have been using the app more. It is a more user-friendly app than we had previously. They can manage their own trips that way, anybody can at any time of day, 24/7, and that was really important to us, and we've seen an increase in that.

([00:14:55](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=895.14)):

For the people that do have to call in or do prefer to call in, which we completely understand, we did not want that to change anything for them because some people still just need that connection to us to have that other voice on the end that says please just help me get my trips scheduled. They don't want to take that and do that themselves. They want somebody else to help. We've been able to keep that service and, the people that are calling in, we've been able to allow our customer service people to actually help them and spend a little bit more time with them while other people are being able to use the app, and then, of course, as transit systems, we all want to see our ridership increase especially due to the pandemic. That was another area that we were really looking at.

([00:15:52](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=952.08)):

We have some exciting things also coming up. We did receive an NADTC grant, and it is going to allow us to implement where people can use our service. They can schedule services using, a web app that has 99 different languages on it. We're super excited about being able to do that as well.

([00:16:28](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=988.26)):

One of the other things that we have been able to do not just on-demand service, but we've been able to hire a bilingual mobility coordinator as well and so they are really going to be able to reach out to our Spanish-speaking population and help them move toward either using the app better, being able to use our services as they call in or those types of things as well. We're trying to make this very inclusive and easy for people to use.

Erich Lange ([00:17:37](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1057.95)):

I think it's important to look back and think about those planning considerations and what got you to that point of implementation because that really is the foundation of your current and future success. On that point, tell us a little bit about how you got there and what instigated this and what led you to this point.

Julia Castillo ([00:18:02](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1082.52)):

In 2019, we began some work with CTAA. We contracted with them to do a needs assessment to help us perform a needs assessment. Chris Zeilinger came in and worked with us and people in the community. They held focus groups and community outreach events, and that resulted in a full report which then included recommendations to diversify service modes which was based on each community's individualized needs because, even though we serve all rural counties, what the people need within those counties is not always the same.

([00:18:50](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1130.76)):

We have one particular community that has 32% of that community is Latino. We don't have 32% of our whole entire state that's Latino. That's a very condensed population and their needs are very different, and there is some fear for them calling in and giving us their name and all of their information. That was a segment of the population that we realized very quickly we were not serving.

([00:19:23](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1163.19)):

Also, people didn't want to call in 24 hours a day. I mean they didn't want to call in 24 hours ahead of time. That was something that was made very well known to us in those outreach efforts. The other thing with the large Latino population, one of the recommendations was to include a checkpoint service to eliminate those language barriers, and so we worked for a few years on how can we get funding for that, what's that going to look like. That led to us hiring a bilingual mobility coordinator. We're going to be starting a service in 2023. That is going to be that checkpoint service. We got a grant from AARP to purchase benches, so that we have identified now certain areas around this community where we can place those benches, and those will be the stop points that people can walk to. They don't have to give us any of their personal information, but we'll be able to serve them in the same way as those people that do use our on-demand or our demand response services, too.

([00:20:33](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1233.63)):

After developing that plan, then the pandemic was in full force. That was something that Brooke and I then took a step back and said, "We have a real opportunity here to look at what our services look like and what we want them to be." That caused us to create a brand-new business plan which our board adopted, and then we looked at how we can fund certain things that we wanted to fund. We did a lot of grant writing during the pandemic and, unbeknownst to us, we got almost every single grant that we applied for and then felt really overwhelmed because now we have all this money and all of these projects. We have a very small staff, so we weren't quite sure how to do that, but having more money than not enough money, we realized is a really good thing.

([00:21:42](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1302.42)):

One of those grants that we got was from the Iowa DOT and the Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council. They had some extra money and they wanted to put it towards transportation. What we used it for was to do a needs assessment. How are we not serving those people with disabilities or how could we better serve them? That led into a bigger discussion. We created a coalition. We went after another grant for diversity, and then that created even more talk about how can we better serve all of our communities, we have stakeholders involved, county supervisors, city officials and riders. We included riders in this as well, so, now, what do we want to do?

([00:22:40](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1360.56)):

There was a plan created after that, and what that developed was people wanted more diverse modes of transportation. They want it on-demand. How can I just call you and say, hey, I need to go to the grocery store because I don't have any milk and I want to make banana bread now, those types of things. We were starting to look at transportation a little bit different as well. We are used to serving people to get them to medical trips, to dialysis, to cancer treatments, to school, to those types of things, but what about the people that just want to live their life? Like we all have done, we've run out of toilet paper or milk or anything, and they just need to go to the store now. They don't want to wait 24 hours before they can do that.

([00:23:28](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1408.41)):

That's where this program, this on-demand we started, looking at all the different softwares that were out there. Brooke did an amazing job of organizing all of that and summarizing what all of those looked like before we picked a specific vendor, and then we just had to go in and sell the board on that. The board had no problem with it. They thought this would be a really great opportunity for us to move forward. It allowed us, after the pandemic started winding down, even though I realize we're still in it, we're not in the crust of it anymore, that we could come back different than what we were previously. That's what we've done. Brooke has done an amazing job in figuring out and working from this idea that was brought by all of these people and bringing it into the reality of what HIRTA is right now. We're super excited about that.

([00:24:36](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1476.12)):

Brooke, that's when all the fun began, right?

Brooke Ramsey ([00:24:39](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1479.63)):

Yes. The one thing I would add to that, Julia touched on the coalition and the feedback we got from our riders, I would say the riders don't know how to use the terminology that we use in transit. They didn't come to us and say, "We want you to diversify your delivery method. We want you to diversify your services." They came to us and said, "I want this." As transit people, we had to ask more questions, get more details and figure out what they're really asking us for, which was sometimes challenging ~~because,~~ when you're trying to dig into the feedback that you're getting from people, you just want to make sure that you do it in a way that they don't see it as you arguing or shutting them down, that you are just trying to get further details and better understand what they're requesting because, a lot of times, the terminology of what they're saying and what it actually means is not always the same thing.

Julia Castillo ([00:25:41](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1541.4)):

That's a good point, too, because one of the things we wanted to make sure. People were saying, "Well, transportation is a barrier." When you dig into that, oftentimes, it's not transportation that's the barrier. It's them not understanding how transportation works or the limitations of transportation or it is the barrier is caused because there's no flexibility on the end of where they're trying to get to.

([00:26:09](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1569.96)):

Transportation can only do so much, so I think, through this process, Brooke and I were able to do a lot of education about transportation as well, and I think that also helped us be able to develop something that everyone was going to be able to understand at the most simplistic level knowing that they could use that or they could stay and use what they were familiar with, but we didn't want to just throw it out there and say, "Everybody needs to change and do something different." We were very mindful of that because we spent the time to get to know the people that are using our services and those that we weren't serving and what they needed as well in order to ride ~~us. I think~~ we used the pandemic well in trying to just gain a lot of information, develop our business plan, redo our strategic plan and just make goals of where we know we want to go.

Erich Lange ([00:27:16](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1636.35)):

Kudos to you for not just surviving the pandemic, but coming out stronger. I mean that's incredible. I know a lot of transit agencies are just trying to keep their head above water. Obviously, I'm sure you had elements of that, but to be able to plan and then say, "Okay, what's the future going to look like?" very strategic and to better serve your population. ~~To that point-~~

Julia Castillo ([00:27:41](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1661.34)):

Brooke will always tell you that anytime that there is a challenge or something that looks pretty dire, I'm the optimist that says, "How can we make this an opportunity?" We had many days where we were trying to hold our head above water, but that wasn't every day. We knew this was a great opportunity. As bad as it was, it was also a great opportunity, and we didn't want an opportunity wasted.

Erich Lange ([00:28:11](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1691.25)):

To that point, I think Andrew will tell you I've done a lot of work more on the engagement side especially with Transit Planning for All, and a lot of the things that you're saying is really baked into that technical assistance center, but I was wondering if you could just explain a little bit more about how you approached the engagement side of this project. With such a diverse demographic from rural to urban and in between, but also different populations, people who maybe only spoke Spanish or non-English speakers to older adults, people with disabilities, whoever that was for your service area, how did you as an agency approach that and make sure things were inclusive, but also accessible?

Brooke Ramsey ([00:29:02](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1742.16)):

We have a transportation advisory group, and that's mostly comprised of representatives of different populations. For example, our local AAA, Area Agency on Aging, our local one is called Aging Resources of Central Iowa, so we have a representative from their organization that comes to our TAG. We looked at who were those community partners, those folks who sit on the TAG, but we also looked at who isn't coming to the TAG and tried to add on and amplify that.

([00:29:42](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1782.42)):

One of the things that we did through the NADTC grant was to start to do some work with One Iowa, which is our local or statewide advocacy group for LGBTQ population. Bringing them in, we found that folks who are in smaller communities, and they're part of the LGBTQ community, don't always feel safe in acknowledging that information.

([00:30:12](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1812.48)):

We have one rider who we take routinely for his kidney checks, and there was one time when the rider just didn't come out. The driver actually identified that something was wrong, something medically was going on where he wasn't very coherent, convinced him to get on the bus. We ended up hearing back from the rider that this actually saved his life. He spent over a month in the hospital receiving care.

([00:30:45](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1845.36)):

Then later, when we called to talk to him and get a success story just as a part of our normal outreach process that we use, sometimes when we go back to funders and say like, "Hey, here's some successes. Here's a great story," we reached back out and found that, after that experience, this rider realized that they didn't want to live the rest of their life being mis-pronouned and they came out as trans, so she had a conversation with me that, living in this small community, she loves the service. She could not live there without us, but she does plan to move away into a larger community because she doesn't feel comfortable being out in the public, shopping in the grocery store, dressing the way that she wants. ~~,~~ ~~which is sad,~~ ~~but~~ it's true that there are people in our communities that we need to make sure that we have safe spaces for them, that we listen to them, that we're having policies and procedures that are signage, that the way that we train our drivers and our staff is inclusive of all community members.

([00:31:52](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1912.29)):

I never would've really thought we needed to develop more around so many different dynamic community members. If we hadn't had gone through this whole process, these things wouldn't have come up for us.

Julia Castillo ([00:32:16](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1936.68)):

One of the other things that we were very conscious of doing is people that came to those focus groups, and we made sure that there were riders with disabilities. We had someone who was blind, and there were some things that were very important to her, so we allowed her to do some more research on them so that she could come back to us and talk about what that was, what she needed us to do better. There was one lady, she didn't have internet to be able to join us for these groups, so we took her to the library which was the one place that was open so that she could still participate and give her feedback, because she was elderly and she had a disability, and she wanted to use our services and she wanted to be part of how she could make those better for us.

([00:33:22](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2002.5)):

There's those types of things where you have to make sure that you're not excluding people for simple things that we typically take for granted like having internet at your home or having a smartphone or all of those types of things. We were very, very mindful of who we needed to be at the table to tell us what they needed so that we could create a service that was going to be inclusive for them.

Andrew Carpenter ([00:33:55](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2035.62)):

One thing that this makes me think of is you're putting together a whole suite of options basically to be able to serve the different needs around your different communities, and so this on-demand service is additional to your other services. How do you, one, differentiate it from your other services, and then how do you or passengers decide which of these services is used when and where?

Brooke Ramsey ([00:34:34](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2074.74)):

HIRTA's previous scheduling software was actually developed and created back in the '90s. I know I'm old enough that that doesn't sound like a long time ago, but if you just think about computers and cellphones and the difference in technology today than what we had in our lives in 1990, that will already tell you it was a long time ago. It was originally created to provide minimal dispatching tools. Over time our transit needs changed and technology changed. People expect different things now. We needed a more sophisticated technology. We went ahead and picked a technology that was automated and, not only automated the process for our team, but it automated the process for customers as well.

([00:35:35](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2135.64)):

We talk a lot about the customers being empowered to self-service. If you imagine using an Uber app or a Lyft app or any other TNC type app, you want to have that spontaneity where you pop the app open and you can schedule for the future if you know what's coming up, but you can also look at what's available right now or how soon can it be available. That's what we wanted for the riders.

([00:36:04](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2164.14)):

We did find Via saw the majority of our needs. Now, that doesn't necessarily mean that there aren't things that were concessions. There are some things that we had to give up along the way, but we had to prioritize what we wanted and what we wanted available now, and the automation and the freedom to have that be much more automated than what we were manually doing before or took our staff a lot of time. We used to charge an additional fee for people who requested same-day rides. The automation allowed us to fit those trips into the existing schedules and actually helped increase ridership.

([00:36:47](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2207.55)):

The adoption has been great. There's about 700 people that have the app downloaded right now. I was incredibly surprised by that compared to the amount of people that used to use it before. While the new software doesn't have every single thing we had before, we are working with them. We meet with them weekly, and they're trying to learn more about the use cases of the things that we lost to try and develop some of those features moving forward. That won't just benefit HIRTA. That will benefit our peers across the nation where some of this technology is rolled out. We're really excited to be able to be a part of that.

Andrew Carpenter ([00:37:40](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2260.89)):

How do you determine if you're using an on-demand or a scheduled trip?

Brooke Ramsey ([00:37:58](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2278.5)):

It depends on when people call and when they need to go. The beauty of what we're using now is that the rider doesn't have to know that. All they have to know is when do they want their ride. They either call and they ask. They can email or they can do that self-servicing on the mobile application. They just put that information in and it gets blended into what looks like one service to the rider. They don't have to call and ask for, "I want on-demand service today." They see the same drivers. They see the same vehicles. It's the same contact information. It really simplified the process for them.

Erich Lange ([00:38:41](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2321.04)):

From an internal perspective, you mentioned that transition to this software for your staff, for yourselves. How was the transition process?

Brooke Ramsey ([00:38:58](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2338.5)):

Well, we definitely had the fear of loss of control with our operations staff. Anytime there's change, especially when you're doing work manually and you trust yourself, now you have to go to this automated system and you have to trust that the system is going to do what you want and what you think is best. We knew that getting that buy-in early on and the change was very important, which is why we involve not just myself that mainly does our project management, but also included the driver supervisor and the manager of our communications team and really sought them into the conversations and said, "This is what we need the system to do. This is how we need it to function," and really involve them in it so they had exciting news to share with their team. It came out continuously ahead of time. This is what we're looking forward to. I think bringing the team in early and having them provide that feedback was definitely a help. Again, like Julia said, there have been hiccups along the way, but they're much more understanding when they have all of the background information.

Erich Lange ([00:40:14](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2414.07)):

To follow up on that, could you elaborate more on the timeline that that process took from knowing that, say, you were going with Via right around that timeline to flipping the switch and turning it on essentially? How long was that?

Brooke Ramsey ([00:40:29](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2429.16)):

It was approved in April. We thought it was going to go live August 1st. As we were doing some thorough testing of the system once it was set up and technically ready to go live, our team did a lot of testing with our existing routes and what that would look like and then found that there were some tweaks that we wanted made, so we ended up pushing the start date back to September. We could have gone live in August, so I would say four months from the time that we signed all of the paperwork and worked with the team to get the system set up.

Erich Lange ([00:41:21](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2481.99)):

That's impressive.

Julia Castillo ([00:41:22](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2482.2)):

Which is really, really quickly.

Andrew Carpenter ([00:41:26](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2486.28)):

Projects are usually years-long endeavors.

Julia Castillo ([00:41:30](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2490.24)):

We have been looking at software previously. From the time we made the decision of who we wanted to go with and got the board to sign off on it until it went live was probably four months, but we had done some previous work in checking out other softwares and looking at that and making that decision. That took about three or four months as well to get through that process, so it was still under a year from start to finish, and that's kind of unheard of. Once we make a decision, we want it. ~~now.~~

Brooke Ramsey ([00:42:16](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2536.41)):

I've, obviously, worked for Julia for quite some time, and she's always, when there's been a new product that comes out, she wants me to look at it. She wants me to consider it. Especially if there's a product that's less expensive or it's supposed to make operations easier and more efficient, she always has to look at it, and I'm always thinking, oh, not another one, not another sales pitch. I feel like, over years of time, we were constantly seeing new products and things and mostly knowing we weren't planning on a change, but at least we knew who the players were in the field so we had a top list of contenders when we started really getting serious about changing a software.

Andrew Carpenter ([00:43:02](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2582.4)):

While you were testing, you mentioned that you uncovered some item or some things that you wanted to fix or tweak a little bit. Can you talk a little bit about how you did the testing and then how you made those tweaks happen before you went live?

Brooke Ramsey ([00:43:28](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2608.53)):

One of the things we did was pull down a week's worth of data, of real data that had been verified and we knew these were the trips that were requested, the times they were requested, what really actually happened. We took that data and put it in the new system, in Via, and we looked at how did that system arrange the trips. What we found was that, the original, what we call zones or parameters around how far a particular pool of vehicles could travel, it was too wide. It was sending vehicles back and forth between different towns when one vehicle could be providing that service exclusively.

([00:44:15](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2655.69)):

We worked with Via's tech team, and they made some changes in the algorithm of their coding and restricted down some different things so that the system operated much more like how we had been operating before. Fear of loss of control, that was one of the things that gave our team some justification in saying, "Okay, this is gonna be okay. The system is going to work the way we want it to work and it's going to do what we want, and we can trust it now." In the meantime, for them to update all of the stuff in the back, we did decide that ultimately we wanted that change to happen because we were already changing things for the customers and we already had some changes for the staff. We wanted to limit how big of an impact that would be. We didn't want to go live and then work to change it, so we pushed the start date back to September.

Andrew Carpenter ([00:45:14](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2714.67)):

That's awesome that you tested that ahead of time and you were able to do that because I think I've seen a few examples where the testing happened by jumping in the deep end and it led to some pain. Being able to alleviate some of that I think might be a good point for a lot of people to take away from that.

Brooke Ramsey ([00:45:37](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2737.95)):

Another thing I would recommend, we did some marketing campaign around the app when we did go live and we told folks we actually started not on September 1st, but more in the middle of the month. We did that for training reasons, to allow us more time to go out and train the drivers. We provided the first couple of weeks, in September and the whole month of October free rides to anyone who self-scheduled. That really encouraged people to download the app and to try using the service.

([00:46:20](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2780.64)):

We were excited that, with being able to do on demand trips, the service would appeal to people who had historically thought of stigmas around public transportation, only available for older adults, only available for people with disabilities, only available to people who have lower income. If they had an app that was more user-friendly, that let them ride whenever they wanted, they didn't have to pre-cram their life, these were things that maybe would appeal to a new audience, and I think we're seeing that having so many people adopt the smartphone application and riders who have never used us before. I would encourage people to think about if they're going to make a similar change.

Julia Castillo ([00:47:07](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2827.59)):

We have fewer large buses than we used to. We had earlier on started purchasing some Ford Transits. Those don't look like the typical bus for those with disabilities. They look more just like a smaller vehicle. I also think that that as well has increased some of the ridership and taken some of that stigma out of what people typically think the buses are used for. Even though we still use buses in service, nobody gets to choose what kind of vehicle they get, but I do think that that in addition to this also helped limit those stigmas.

([00:48:00](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2880.81)):

Shortly after Brooke and I had first started working at HIRTA, our vehicles were a white bus with a blue stripe that looked just like the ADA sticker. It was blue and white. We also said, "We don't want that look anymore. We have to do something so that people know these buses are not just for the elderly or those with disabilities or those with lower income." It's taken us quite a few years, but I think we're starting to get there now. That stigma is starting to wear off, and more people are realizing that this service is for anybody who needs it or wants it. Gas prices went higher. "Okay, well, you can ride the bus a lot cheaper than you can drive your car." Even though that we are in the more rural areas, we are really aware of trying to get more people to use public transit.

Brooke Ramsey ([00:49:30](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2970.12)):

The software itself looks at combining trips together, increasing your passengers per hour. It will try to move trips predicting that a driver is going to run behind on schedule, so to help improve your onsite performance. One of the things that it'll do is it'll actually move trips off of one driver to another to try and get them off of the clock sooner if they're not needed. It's really dynamic in ensuring that the service is more cost-effective.

([00:50:08](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3008.37)):

With the rider app before or the app that we had was only available in English. Now, the app is available in two languages, which we picked English and Spanish based on our limited English proficiency plan. Spanish is the second most commonly spoken language.

([00:50:33](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3033.99)):

The system shows them a variety of time. If you want an on-demand trip, it'll pop up. When you say you want it at eight o'clock in the morning, it'll pop up and show you within a half an hour of the requested time what your various options might be and what it assumes your pickup and what it assumes your drop-off will be so that you can select that trip on your own, which I think is very helpful because our old application, when you used the smartphone app to schedule a ride, you were really just submitting a ride request, and that went and sat out in our software and waited for a dispatcher to take a look at it to see if we could even accommodate the trip. Meanwhile, the rider is just sitting there waiting to see what happens next in the app.

([00:51:20](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3080.55)):

This really empowers them more to have that information, to use it faster and to schedule it right at that minute instead of waiting to find out what's going to happen, and maybe we can't even accommodate the request, which is never what you want someone to have to wait to find out.

Andrew Carpenter ([00:51:40](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3100.35)):

Do people find out immediately if there's not a trip available for them?

Brooke Ramsey ([00:51:43](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3103.98)):

Yeah. It'll say that there's no seat available, and then we do occasionally... Folks can go in and adjust the time to try and get a different option or, occasionally, we'll have someone who calls in, usually they're confused why they got the message, so they think that something is wrong. That's an educational opportunity for us, "Okay, instead of 8:00, try 8:15." That'll push that half-an-hour window out a little bit, and then they start seeing the trip's availability, or our staff can just schedule the arrival if they have them on the phone. Ultimately, they have the independence if they want or they can call the office and get the support that they need.

Andrew Carpenter ([00:52:28](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3148.8)):

How has this changed what your dispatchers do throughout the day?

Brooke Ramsey ([00:52:37](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3157.56)):

This has actually freed up some of their time. We've done more cross-training. We've seen the hold times go down. As far as morale goes, initially, it was difficult. I will say that. I'm not going to lie. The first couple of weeks were hard, but they understood that it would get better. Now that the riders have had an opportunity to use it, things have settled out quite a bit, I think overall the morale is much better. We talk a lot about retention. This is a really hard time to try and recruit new employees, so we want to do what we can to retain them, and I think making their job easier by providing technology that's more streamlined, ultimately, I think that's going to help with our long-term retention of our staff.

Andrew Carpenter ([00:53:44](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3224.01)):

How has this affected your drivers? Does that change their experience at all?

Brooke Ramsey ([00:54:02](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3242.82)):

We had the tablets that we use in the vehicles for the driver's schedule. They were due for lifecycle replacement at the same time.

([00:54:40](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3280.98)):

We went ahead and bid out the tablets and the cellular service for the tablets and picked the vendor, went ahead and got the tablets, got them ready. Then we kept the two different data packages and tablets going at the same time so that we could have one set of tablets with the old application on it and the new tablets with the new application and give time to train the drivers. That way, we went out one-on-one and rode with them and had fake trips in the system so they could see how to use it and got a feel for it. Then, when it went live, Via actually sent several people here, and they went out and rode with the drivers as well, as well our office staff went and rode with them. I went and rode with a couple of drivers the first day so that they had some support and they knew that they weren't by themselves if they thought they were doing something wrong.

([00:55:43](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3343.38)):

Some of it was just first-day glitches and, of course, some of it was being nervous about doing something different. Ultimately, I think it went really well. I was really impressed that we didn't have anybody pulling hair out. We didn't have anyone threatening to quit.

Erich Lange ([00:56:10](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3370.86)):

How is this helping you and other administrators in your day-to-day?

Brooke Ramsey ([00:56:31](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3391.29)):

The system is much more automated. We used to have to every day go in and do a verification process with the previous days' trips. That is done automatically on Via's side now. We also have quite a lengthy monthly reporting process that we have to go through based on sometimes which city, sometimes which county, but whatever funder is providing the service, they want something completely different than any other funder would ask for.

([00:57:06](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3426.75)):

We worked with Via ahead of time. They actually generate those reports in the format that we need and send them to us once a month so we don't have to go out and sort through all this data and wait for it to generate and then export it. It's just automatically given to us, and it's given to us after they've already done the verification process, so that's been helpful.

([00:57:29](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3449.31)):

One of the things we were concerned about was losing that really dynamic and sophisticated reporting through our old system that was really developed for rural systems, but I think we've come to a good compromise. It's working really well right now, so I'm happy about that. I also think, in general, the riders are happy with the new app. Having the riders be happy helps to resolve a lot of escalated complaints that maybe we used to get before or feedback that we would get before. We've provided a solution for people that they wanted, so we're spending less of our time managing some of those situations.

([00:58:14](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3494.43)):

Julia, I don't know, from your perspective, what's been better for you?

Julia Castillo ([00:58:18](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3498.99)):

I really do think that it has helped our management staff, especially those that work directly over customer service and dispatch and those that work directly over our drivers. I call them management staff. We have one over each of those two areas. They have been able to do their management jobs and not have to step in and do as much problem-solving because we have less of those problems. That makes it easier for them, and they're able to then do more of the oversight and give more kudos to the drivers and review more of what the customer service they're doing and being more involved in their training and monitoring. It has allowed our management staff to stay in a management role and not be on the day-to-day groundwork and the frontline as much as they used to be when we were trying to resolve all of these other issues.

([00:59:45](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3585.09)):

Even though we still have some hiccups and we still are going through trying to resolve some issues, for the most part, our staff is very happy with it. When staff are happy, It makes our job easier just for that very reason that they have better job satisfaction.

Brooke Ramsey ([01:00:11](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3611.31)):

We found out early on in the pandemic that there was a feature in our old system that wasn't working, and it would be temporarily fixed, and by that I mean a day or two, and then we would immediately have problems again. I had our team go back and pull some tickets from the old support line, and I found that it had chronically been a problem for almost two years, but we were so busy looking at pandemic-related problems that we weren't really tracking this one continuous failure. When we worked with the software vendor to try and fix it, we pointed out this has been a consistent issue that we're putting a Band-Aid on for almost two years. There's a problem here. This is a systemic issue.

([01:01:04](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3664.86)):

Now, that we've made this change and we're a couple months into it, if we have a problem, if there's a glitch, if there's something that just isn't working the way that it should, it's really prioritized. The communication is better. We have greater insight and transparency on the tickets that we put in and how that's being reviewed, how that's being processed, how that's being fixed. All of that has had a great improvement and, from a management perspective, I'm spending so much less time trying to just be that escalator and that conduit to find a solution because the support team is actually doing the support. I don't have to be that person anymore, which is great.

Andrew Carpenter ([01:02:22](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3742.62)):

You have mentioned once or twice that there were a few hiccups and challenges along the way in deploying this part of your service. Could you go a little bit into what some of those challenges were both internally and externally in the customer-facing or passenger-facing side?

Brooke Ramsey ([01:02:45](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3765.9)):

The internal process, was really more of the concern of loss or fear of control on our staff's end and the fear of the unknown. Once we got through that and involved them more, I think that helped a lot because the communication wasn't just coming from Julia or from myself. It was coming from their immediate supervisor, their immediate manager that was telling them and letting them see things as they went along, and they got an opportunity to get excited about some of the new features and functions.

([01:03:26](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3806.34)):

As far as our external challenges, I think making sure people knew how to use the app, making sure that they knew when to start using it, so for example we did have people because we had that testing period. People were trying to schedule rides on it in August when we weren't going to be actually using it until September, so monitoring two different places and communicating with the customers on what to expect and when to expect it. Providing data points to funders.

([01:04:15](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3855.42)):

For example, since we're not doing our own verification anymore, there is a bit of a delay between when the system has confirmed that the verification is done versus when we used to get that done because we did that daily. We had to communicate back to the funders and let them know some reports maybe they're used to getting by the fifth or the 10th of the month might now be the 10th or the 15th, that the format was going to look a little different. It was just a lot of communicating a lot of information, providing information and making sure that they knew what to expect and when to expect it.

Brooke Ramsey ([01:05:10](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3910.44)):

We already knew that the application was screen reader friendly. We knew what languages it was available in, so I think just making sure that in the backend that the system ran was more of the preliminary work that we did. However, when we were talking about the app only be available in two languages, which I say only, I mean I'm really glad to have two rather than just one, but only available with the option of two languages, we knew that was something that we needed to look at other ways, and we found that their web portal could then integrate with Google Translate which would give us up to 99 different languages. That's when Julia mentioned we had that grant through NADTC, that planning grant. We worked with our coalition to say, "What's the primary focus here?" That language barrier kept coming up, so that was one of the solutions that we went with for that project.

Andrew Carpenter ([01:07:01](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4021.08)):

You mentioned both grouping and your demographics. I'm curious how has this changed how many passengers are on the bus at any one time, and also have your demographics shifted at all now that people are starting to realize that this is a general public service?

Brooke Ramsey ([01:07:32](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4052.46)):

Yes, we have new riders. I haven't looked yet at what the demographics of the riders are. That's something that we probably need to start looking at and then working with our outreach program to try and do more around that information.

([01:07:56](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4076.28)):

I know one of the things that the new software will do is, if a rider is using the app, we can pick like a pop-up survey, for example, how is your ride, and find out that customer survey information, but we could customize it with other questions as well that isn't necessarily about the trip, but about them or if we had a question on how many of you would want rides on Christmas Day or something around a community event or what other language do you speak. We can put that type of survey that pops up after their trip and capture additional data. I think that'll be a good opportunity for us down the road to look at what our outreach and our DEI plans need to be moving forward.

Andrew Carpenter ([01:09:02](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4142.91)):

Has the number of people grouped on to one bus or vehicle increased?

Brooke Ramsey ([01:09:10](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4150.23)):

Oh, definitely, and that I don't have a huge data point to provide as far as passenger per hour yet, but I can tell you just in doing our NTD reports that the number of vehicles operated at maximum service hasn't significantly increased, but the ridership has consistently gone up from month to month since we got the new technology.

Julia Castillo ([01:09:59](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4199.49)):

a transit agency, no matter how small they are, they have to have their goals written down. They have to know where they want to go. We knew that we wanted an on-demand service. We thought it was the right thing for our community, but we're just sitting here in these offices, so we needed to go out to the community and say what is it that you need to see if that does that even match what we think they need? In our case, fortunately, it did, but it doesn't always. Do that outreach. Get out there and talk to your people. Talk to people that are riding it, but also talk to the people you aren't serving.

([01:10:50](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4250.1)):

We found one of the best ways to do that is to go to farmer's markets. There's a lot of people at farmer's markets. We would just have our outreach, or our mobility coordinator just go and have the tablet, and we would just ask them questions like why aren't you riding? A lot of times, we found out it was they didn't know that they could use the service or whatever it is. You can figure out, oh, well, this is why, because we're not reaching out to these people or they don't know about us. We need to do more education.

([01:11:22](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4282.41)):

Once you figure out your goal, just start taking those baby steps toward that goal. We didn't come about this in the four months that it took us to decide to implement it. There was a lot of work that went into that beforehand, and then we would just figure out these little steps and, like I said, we applied for funding. We got stakeholder input, support, we educated, we outreached, there's all these things that go into it, but do something. If you don't do anything, you're going to stay where you're at and you're never going to move forward. Don't expect that it's all going to come and happen all at one time. Start taking those baby steps, and you will eventually get there. ~~, but you have to have that goal written down.~~

([01:12:15](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4335.57)):

I know a lot of small transit systems have very small staff. I tell people all the time rural systems usually don't have departments. We don't have departments full of all these different people. We are no different. We do not have a lot of staff. We talk about departments, but we're usually talking about one department head that's overseeing three people. That's our department. It just sounds bigger when you say it's a department, but it's really not. we prioritize and we make sure that everybody gets bought in and brought in to what we're doing and what the vision is.

([01:13:33](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4413.21)):

A lot of times, when Brooke and I are talking to our other staff, they have great suggestions that her or I maybe never thought of, and so we bring them in and then they're part of the team, and how can we work all of that? Right down to our dispatchers, our customer service, our drivers, we're all people, we're all serving, we all have ideas, so talk to your people.

Brooke Ramsey ([01:14:08](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4448.64)):

Dream big and then manage the plan. There's a lot of things we're doing today that some of them are things we talked about 10 years ago, and it wasn't anywhere that we could fund and it wasn't anything we had the capacity to take on, but just documenting it and saying, "I would love to be here. I would love to have this," and then, over time, you'll hear about a different grant or a different opportunity and then you'll think, "Hey. Remember that thing we wanted to do? Well, maybe this is how we start to get there." We didn't have the funding in our budget to be able to do all of the things that we've done in the past couple of years. It definitely was not without grant writing and a lot of creativity to be able to get here. We're just excited to be able to work the plan, and I should add that our ridership has gone up 22%. Since we started with the new software.

Erich Lange ([01:15:08](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4508.34)):

It's already paying off.

([01:15:14](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4514.7)):

With the benefit of hindsight and looking back to either the implementation period or even before, what would you suggest other agencies consider when trying to adopt this type of service?

Julia Castillo ([01:15:39](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4539.03)):

I would consider bringing somebody in that has a lot of knowledge. We did a technical grant with CTAA. We did get some money to do that, but we knew CTAA had the knowledge to help us figure out what we needed to do better within our service area. That plan that we developed or that they developed, which was just a few pages long, but it was very condensed and it gave us a starting point to say, "This is what an expert is telling us we need to do. This is how we're going to best serve our community," and then we went out there and started testing it. We talked to the people. This is what the experts are saying. Does that jibe with what our customers really want? ~~It did.~~

([01:16:41](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4601.58)):

There, you've got customers and experts. Bringing that together also really helps with getting buy-in. It also helps with grant writing because you don't have just the transit system who's saying, "Hey. We really need this. We don't have anything to back it up, but believe us, we really need this." We actually had something that said, "This is where we need to go. This is why we need this funding."

([01:17:09](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4629.96)):

That doesn't always have to include money. You go to somebody who has the knowledge that can give you the stats or that can give you what you need and then you use that as your catalyst to say, "We can take this data and we can do something with it. That may just be sending your mobility coordinator out to the farmer's markets to figure out who are you not serving and why are you not serving them? If 90% of the people you talk to come back and say, "I didn't have any idea it was your service," you know right there that your marketing needs to be beefed up, your education needs to be beefed up. That doesn't necessarily take a lot of money. It does take some time, but that's something very simple that we've learned over the years, just little things like that and we were like, "Well, that's something we can build upon. How do we do it?"

Brooke Ramsey ([01:18:18](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4698.33)):

We talk about that a lot with justification of need. As an example, we work with the different public health offices as they develop their community health needs assessments. We don't go to the meetings and say, "Oh, well, we can do that. We can solve your problems." We go and we listen. Sometimes, there's something to vote on. Ultimately, the more detailed we can get them to be in those plans, when they say they need transportation or transportation is a barrier, well, elaborate on that. Don't just write that transportation is a barrier. Tell us how it's a barrier. Tell us how it needs to be improved or what you need from transportation so that, like Julia talked about, when there is a grant opportunity, we can say, "Hey. Look at this. Here is this documented justification of me from a reputable source, the local public health office. This is why we need to solve this problem and this is how the funding can be used," and that really supports your grant applications.

([01:19:26](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4766.79)):

Erich, with your previous work, you have a lot of experience with that, really working with those community partners and reaching out and engaging with people to find out what are they saying? Is that the number of days a week to provide service? Is that the hours within the day? Is that not doing trips into a larger metro area outside of your service area? It could be so many different things, but it's not elaborated on, and that happens from the customers, it happens from the healthcare providers. Sometimes, the healthcare providers are the hardest ones to get to come to the table, so you really have to be diverse in who you're working with and engaging.

Andrew Carpenter ([01:20:27](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4827.81)):

Thank you to Julia and Brooke for taking the time today to talk to us and then also for all of your work at HIRTA and all of the HIRTA staff for everything that everyone is doing over there. We're always excited to hear about new projects that keep popping up over at HIRTA, and so I'm sure that we will bother you again for more information spreading out to our peers. ~~here.~~

([01:20:57](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/EyDzPFVZt2yD5pWDbcuRtMJqBM9B1da_3lFhHLCLbv2jEXuqDMTySiCUtc9G-9nwzWG7YNlK1rByWiKUuzpvLDaELfs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4857.93)):

With that, thank you all.