Pandemic TRIP Use Survey Report

Executive Summary

During March and April of 2020, enrolled rider-use of TRIP volunteer driver mileage reimbursement service fell 29% from pre-pandemic use. By May 2020 ridership had rebounded back to 80% of the number of riders using the service in February.

In May, surveys were sent to the 71% of riders (562) who had CONTINUED to use TRIP and request mileage reimbursements for March and April travel and the same survey was also sent to the 29% of riders (230) who had STOPPED using TRIP during the same period. 59% of the riders who had continued to use the service returned completed surveys (329) and 38% of the riders who had stopped using the service (88) returned completed surveys.

94.3% of the total of 417 riders participating in the survey indicated that being enrolled in the TRIP Program and having an established relationship with a volunteer driver had helped them deal with the impacts of the Novel Coronavirus Pandemic. In individual respondent comments the importance of having a relationship with a reliable, caring and trusted volunteer driver was the most cited reason for believing that being a TRIP participant helped them deal with the Pandemic and accounted for their feeling "safe". TRIP clients were able to continue to access stores and get transportation to scheduled medical appointments though 213 of the 417 survey respondents indicated that they only left the house “if absolutely necessary”. 73 survey respondents indicated they were not leaving their homes “at all”.

135 participants indicated that no medical appointments had been missed due to the Pandemic. It is suspected that the missed medical appointments of the other 282 TRIP riders may largely have been “missed” because medical providers cancelled the appointments. Another explanation for some missed trips by riders continuing to use the service, and In the case of the 88 riders who stopped using TRIP in March and more in April, there were situations when riders decided it was too dangerous to go out or volunteer drivers came to that conclusion or riders and drivers decided together that the trips were too risky. In any case the amount of requested mileage reimbursement declined 15% for March and another 16% for April. In May requests for mileage reimbursement went up 14% over the amount of April requests, indicating an upward rebound in transportation being provided, but still only 83% of pre-Pandemic service.

During the months of March and April most TRIP clients socialized with family and friends by phone call or email with about 40 of the survey participants hinting personal isolation. About 60% of the TRIP riders participating in the survey received information from local television stations and communications with friends and family primarily. Facebook was used as a news source by 14% of those responding to the survey.

It is evident that the TRIP Program is an essential resource for its clients, both to meet their transportation needs and to provide emotional and social support.
Comparison of *riders who continued use* and *riders who stopped using* the service

Q1. How much has the Covid-19 pandemic impacted your daily routine?

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<tr>
<td>50% Some impact</td>
<td>32% Some impact</td>
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<tr>
<td>43% High impact</td>
<td>56% High impact</td>
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<tr>
<td>94% Impacted</td>
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Q2. Do you think that having a volunteer driver prior to the Covid-19 pandemic has helped you deal with the impacts of the health emergency?

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<td>95.4 YES</td>
<td>90.6 YES</td>
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First twenty respondent explanations of how already having a TRIP volunteer driver helped:

- *My driver has always taken care of me.*
- *Because it gives me more security.*
- *It would be very hard to find a volunteer driver now.*
- *Because I know the driver and the safety-rules she follows.*
- *Whatever I need I can call and my volunteer will take me.*
- *I wouldn't know how to get to my doctor appointments and get groceries.*
- *Because driver helps me a lot and keeps me calm.*
- *Less to worry about taking transportation with people you don’t know.*
- *Not having to look for a ride in other ways.*
- *My driver is very reliable, caring and responsible.*
- *Got to know my driver before Covid-19 and trust my driver.*
- *Volunteer still takes me to doctors, shopping and church.*
- *Because I ride alone with my volunteer.*
- *For essential rides.*
- *Volunteer is very helpful and dependable.*
- *Knowing I can still depend on volunteer driver, confident to deal with Covid-19.*
- *I feel safe and we take the proper steps to stay safe.*
- *Were good friends we go through this time together.*
- *Less stress in wondering.*
- *I have someone who already know what to buy me because she already does.*

Prominent mention of the importance of the volunteer driver is common in rider explanations of the value of having TRIP service during the pandemic as shown in a word cloud of 201 respondents’ explanations of *why it was good to be a TRIP client.*
Q3. Are you having to stay home more and asking your volunteer to pick up supplies for you? (one choice only)

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<tr>
<td>15% Not leaving house</td>
<td>27% Not leaving house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33% Same as before</td>
<td>26% Same as before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52% Only if necessary</td>
<td>48% Only if necessary</td>
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Of those who continued to use TRIP transportation assistance at a level sufficient to warrant submission of mileage reimbursement requests for March and April trips, 67% of the riders took “stay at home” directions seriously, either not leave the house or only making trips they felt to be essential.

75% of those who stopped using the service, or stopped submitting mileage reimbursement requests, indicated they were not leaving their homes or leaving only for essential purposes; 27% said they were not leaving their home pretty much at all, which may mean that their volunteers were less comfortable driving for their riders and stopped providing the service.

Q4. What kind of trips are you taking? (all that apply)

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<td>75% Errands and stores with volunteer</td>
<td>67% Errands and stores with volunteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71% Regular medical appointments</td>
<td>65% Regular medical appointments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33% Emergent medical</td>
<td>36% Emergent medical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28% Get out and go for a ride</td>
<td>27% Get out and go for a ride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24% Visit friends or relatives</td>
<td>12% Visit friends or relatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>14% Religious purposes</td>
<td>14% Religious purposes</td>
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Distribution of trip purposes reported, for both groups, was typical of pre-Pandemic use of TRIP Program assistance, shopping for groceries and supplies followed closely by medical appointments. Interesting that emergency medical trips were slightly higher for those who had stopped using regular TRIP service in March or April.
Q5. Has this pandemic situation caused you any additional stress?

CONTINUED to USE | STOPPED USING
--- | ---
52% Yes, I am overwhelmed | 48% Yes, I am overwhelmed
48% No, I am calm, it will get better | 52% No, I am calm, it will get better

Whether riders had increased stress or were handling their reaction to the Pandemic better does not seem to have made much of a difference as to continuation of using the service or deciding not to use the service. TRIP clients are more reliant on medical services than other members of our communities, have low income, are without the means to drive themselves and are enrolled in the program because they do not have a robust social network.

Given the baseline circumstances of TRIP clients it makes sense that established relationships with drivers and practiced reliance on the services provided results in a high level of emotional support, regardless of outside threats to well-being, so long as the support remains constant.

Q6. How do you learn about the latest updates on the pandemic? (all that apply)

CONTINUED USE | STOPPED USING
--- | ---
69% I watch local news | 61% I watch local news
51% Family, caregiver, or volunteer | 56% Family, caregiver, or volunteer
38% Cable news | 41% Cable news
30% Cell phone news | 36% Cell phone news
14% Facebook | 14% Facebook

Television news channels watched

CONTINUED to USE | STOPPED USING
--- | ---
38% CNN NATIONAL | 24% CNN NATIONAL
34% ABC LOCAL | 37% ABC LOCAL
25% NBC LOCAL | 24% NBC LOCAL
23% CBS LOCAL | 24% CBS LOCAL
19% FOX LOCAL | 20% FOX LOCAL
12% FOX NATIONAL | 10% FOX NATIONAL
8% MSNBC NATIONAL | 21% MSNBC NATIONAL
1% OAN | 3% OAN

Q7. In April, how many medical trips did you have to cancel due to the pandemic?

CONTINUED USE | STOPPED USING
--- | ---
33% None | 29% None
13% One | 11% One
22% Two | 16% Two
16% Three | 14% Three
9% Four | 13% Four
7% Five or more | 17% Five or more

Q8. In April, how many non-medical trips did you have to cancel due to the pandemic?

CONTINUED USE | STOPPED USING
--- | ---
44% None | 38% None
6% One | 8% One
16% Two | 11% Two
12% Three | 8% Three
8% Four | 17% Four
14% Five or more | 17% Five or more
Q9. How are you maintaining some socialization at this time?

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<tr>
<td>77% Family/friends, phone/email</td>
<td>84% Family/friends, phone/email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10% Not socializing before</td>
<td>7% Not socializing before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5% Visiting</td>
<td>6% Visiting</td>
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Q10. How safe have you felt using TRIP during the pandemic??

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<tr>
<td>2% Not safe</td>
<td>9% Not safe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57% Pretty safe</td>
<td>58% Pretty safe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41% Not worried</td>
<td>32% Not worried</td>
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Approximately an equal amount of responses indicating that they felt “pretty safe” during Pandemic travel were received from riders who continued to use TRIP service and those who did not truncated use of TRIP assistance during the period.

Last twenty respondent explanations of why riders felt safe using TRIP:

- My driver uses safety precautions by use of masks, gloves, and wipes.
- TRIP gives me the assurance that I can get food, medicine, and general shopping.
- Because I know my driver like a family member by now.
- I make sure I use face covering and sanitizer.
- I have never felt unsafe, it’s just unsettling.
- Knowing that I have an option to travel when and where necessary.
- My driver makes the trips and I stay in the car.
- Because TRIP have always made me feel good about myself
- Trust in my driver
- Because it’s just me and the driver in the vehicle.
- Wearing a mask and I trust my driver
- I try to keep sheltered as much as possible
- My driver cleans the car and wears a mask.
- Because I have not been using the bus during this time.
- My driver is careful and safe.
- My caregiver and I use facemasks
- Without TRIP I couldn’t go to appointments.
- I don’t have to use public transport. I can maintain social distancing.
- Because I don’t take public transportation, not having to be in groups.
- We use my vehicle and same driver

Again, having a reliable and trustworthy volunteer driver was a common theme in 220 respondents’ explanations of why they felt safe: The importance of the rider/volunteer driver relationship is evident in a word cloud of rider explanations.
NOTE Received from one participant in the survey:

TRIP
Director & Staff

Dear Ladies and gentlemen,

In this pandemic Covid-19, your service is vital for our health, preventing the virus.

Having a driver driving to give peace of mind that is very necessary by for to have a right immune system.

My apology because I have slow vision and I am very excited.

Please continue with your noble program,

I am very appreciative of your help.

Respectfully,

Dorothy