

EL DORADO COUNTY
2015-2016 GRAND JURY
REPORT



DIAL-A-RIDE

CASE 15-02 • MAY 12, 2016

Public Release
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Many county residents, especially those unable to drive themselves, rely upon Dial-A-Ride for transportation to and from work, medical appointments, shopping, recreational pursuits and other activities. It improves riders' independence, self-sufficiency and quality of life.

BACKGROUND

Dial-A-Ride is provided by the El Dorado County Transit Authority (El Dorado Transit), a Joint Powers Authority of El Dorado County and the City of Placerville. Its board of directors is made up of three members from the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors and two from the Placerville City Council. An Executive Director executes board policies and directs the day-to-day operations.

El Dorado Transit has existed in El Dorado County since 1975; Dial-A-Ride since 1993. El Dorado Transit operates from an administrative and operations base in Diamond Springs. It serves a portion of El Dorado County west of the Sierra Crest, called the Western Slope, a mix of rural, agricultural and suburban areas. Placerville is the only incorporated city in the service area and El Dorado Hills is the largest unincorporated community.

METHODOLOGY

- Interviewed El Dorado Transit and Dial a Ride management, supervisors and staff.
- Reviewed Dial-A-Ride documents.

DISCUSSION

Dial-A-Ride is a seven days a week, curb-to-curb, demand response service designed for seniors and disabled residents, but offers limited availability to the general public. Curb-to-curb means a Dial-A-Ride van or bus will pick up in front of a designated location at a pre-scheduled time and take the rider to their preselected destination. Oftentimes, riders share with other passengers to ensure the greatest number of passengers are served. The service is not available in all areas of the western slope. In some areas, service is only made available when a sufficient number of riders request the service.

Dial-A-Ride operates seven days a week, excluding holidays. Pickup times are between 7:30 AM and 5:00 PM on weekdays and 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM on Saturdays and Sundays.

Reservations are required and accepted Monday through Friday between 9:00 A.M. and 3:00 P.M. by calling El Dorado Transit up to three weekdays in advance of the desired ride date. Reservations are booked on a first-come, first-served basis with seniors and persons with disabilities having priority. Reservations are tentative until Dial-A-Ride calls the prospective rider back with a confirmation. A novice first time rider, unaware of the callback policy, may erroneously believe that they have successfully booked a ride with the first call.

Typically, demand exceeds system capacity.¹ Would-be riders are often unable to make reservations when resources are already fully booked. When Dial-A-Ride is unable to fulfill a reservation request, staff will work with a prospective rider, making suggestions to change the date and/or time to accommodate the rider's schedule. As a result, the system does its best to meet the majority of rider service requests.

Riders need to call 24 hours in advance to cancel their scheduled ride. If not present for pickup at a non-cancelled reservation, riders are declared a *no-show*. Three no-shows in a thirty-day period will suspend a rider from using the service for fourteen days. Six no-shows in a ninety-day period will cause a thirty-day suspension. The overwhelming demand for Dial-A-Ride necessitates the suspensions, which are imposed after written notice. Drivers do their best to locate passengers in an apparent no-show situation; however, they may have to abandon a no-show to complete schedules and satisfy commitments. Riders may believe that they have been forgotten by Dial-A-Ride when they have failed to meet the driver at an agreed upon time.

Last year's budget for Dial-A-Ride was \$1.2 million. It is heavily subsidized with fares providing only about five percent of the service cost.² The Transportation Development Act of 1971 provides two funding sources: The Local Transportation Fund is financed from one-quarter percent of the statewide general sales tax and the State Transit Assistance Fund that is derived from the statewide sales tax on diesel fuel.

Dial-A-Ride fares range from \$2.00 to \$7.00 per one-way trip, determined by a zone system. Seniors, 60+ years old, persons with disabilities, and Medicare cardholders pay a reduced fare. Anyone desiring to use Dial-A-Ride's system is asked to complete an application and obtain an El Dorado Transit Photo ID. Verification of residency is required to use Dial-A-Ride and verification of age or disability is required for reduced fares.

The Dial-A-Ride fleet includes seven mini-vans that can carry up to five passengers each. Riders with special needs equipment (e.g. wheelchairs) will reduce the vehicle's passenger capacity. Larger vehicles are available when necessary. Several fleet vehicles are kept in reserve for unexpected situations such as breakdowns or accidents allowing Dial-A-Ride to satisfy scheduled commitments. All Dial-A-Ride vehicles have video surveillance, with appropriate signage, and 2-way radios.

¹ Dial-A-Ride made 24,466 one-way passenger trips in fiscal 2014-2015.

² Passenger fares during fiscal 2014-2015 were \$66,019.00.

El Dorado Transit offers other transportation services not included in this report such as the El Dorado Hills Taxi Voucher Demonstration Project, SAC-MED, Grizzly Flat Flex and ADA Paratransit. Information about those services can be found on the El Dorado Transit web site at <http://www.eldoradotransit.com>.

COMMENDATION

The grand jury commends El Dorado Transit and Dial-A-Ride for providing the best possible service with the limited resources available.

FINDINGS

F1. Dial-A-Ride resources are not adequate to fulfill reservation requests.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. Explore alternate funding sources, to include grants, augment operations and address future demands.

REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

Responses to both findings and recommendations in this report are required by law in accordance with California Penal Code §933 and §933.05 from El Dorado Transit Board of Directors before August 17, 2016.

Address responses to:

The Honorable Suzanne N. Kingsbury
Presiding Judge of the El Dorado County Superior Court
1354 Johnson Blvd.
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150

The Presiding Judge of the El Dorado County Superior Court additionally requests that responses be sent electronically as a *Word* or *PDF* file to facilitate the economical and timely distribution of such responses. Please email responses to El Dorado County Grand Jury reports to: courtadmin@eldoradocourt.org.

Reports issued by the Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury.