

Abstract

This study looks at initial results from the Transportation Wallet for Residents of Affordable Housing (TWRAH) pilot program launched by the City of Portland's Bureau of Transportation (PBOT). The program provided a set of transportation incentives for low-income participants including a \$308 pre-paid Visa card which could be applied to public transit or other transportation services, a free bike share membership, and access to discounted rates on several services. We conducted a survey with the program's participants (278 total responses) to understand how they used the Transportation Wallet and how the program helped them use different modes to get around.

The main findings include: 1) The financial support of this program encouraged some participants to use new mobility services (including Uber/Lyft, bike share, and e-scooter) that they had never used before; 2) the program increased access for participants, helping them make more trips and, for some, get to places they otherwise could not have gone; and, 3) Transportation Fairs, where participants could learn about services and talk to providers, promoted both mode sign-up and mode usage, particularly for new mobility and a reduced fare transit program. Participant feedback suggests that transportation agencies do more to: 1) streamline and educate participants on how to use new mobility and 2) coordinate different service providers better to optimize seamless services for participants.

Pilot Program Background

- The TWRAH program provides transportation funds and support to residents of affordable housing units to help them use access and pay for transportation services.

Components



Available services

TriMet (bus, light rail), streetcar, Taxi, Uber/Lyft, car share, bike share and e-scooter.

Area/location

Seven affordable housing providers, including over 13 affordable buildings in Portland.

Enrollment

Around 500 participants enrolled in the program through Transportation Fairs or waitlist.

Data Collection Method

- Pre-survey (Sept. - Dec. 2019): Representatives from PBOT and the housing providers were on hand to assist in filling out the survey at Transportation Fairs. Ad hoc translation and interpretation services were available on-site.
- Post-survey (Apr. - Sept. 2020): PSU conducted the survey over phone (with online option). PBOT provided interpretation services over phone for those who needed it.
- Covid-19 accommodation: Although the post-survey was conducted in the months following initial COVID-19 related restrictions, most TW participant activity occurred prior to these restrictions, and the survey asked participants to consider the period prior to any restrictions.

Demographics of Post-survey Participants

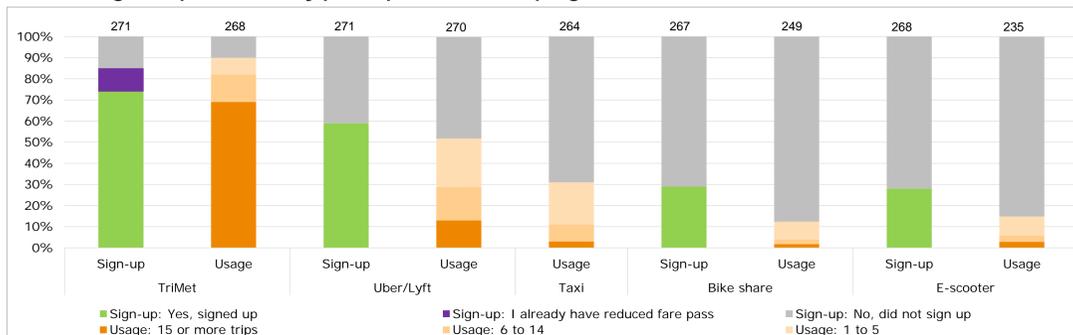
	Post-survey (278 total)	
	%	Count
Race		262
White	41%	109
Latino/Hispanic	16%	41
Black/African American	24%	63
Asian	8%	20
Native American/Alaska Native	6%	15
Others	5%	14
Age		264
18 to 24	4%	10
25 to 34	17%	44
35 to 44	18%	49
45 to 54	23%	60
55 to 64	24%	63
65+	14%	38
Gender		269
Female	64%	174
Male	35%	94
Non-binary	0.4%	1
Language		271
Do not speak English at home	23%	61
Speak (only) English at home	64%	174
Speak English and other languages	13%	36
Employment		278
Not currently working	59%	165
Income		245
Less than \$15,000	68%	167
\$15,000 - \$24,999	19%	47
\$25,000 - \$34,999	9%	23
\$35,000 - \$74,999	4%	8
Vehicle ownership (or Lease)		269
Yes	29%	79
No	71%	190
Driver's license		269
Yes	47%	126
No	53%	143
Smartphone ownership		253
Yes, with a data plan	80%	201
Yes, with cell/text service only	7%	18
No, just a flip phone	11%	28
No cell phone	2%	6

- Most participants did not own a vehicle (71%) or have a driver's license (53% did not)

Results

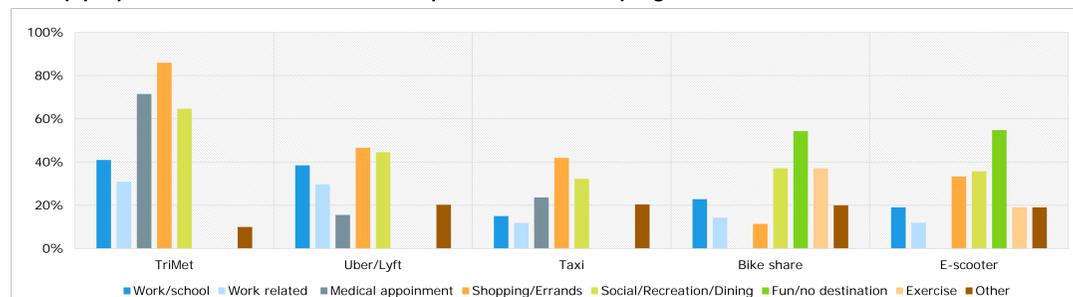
I. The general usage of Transportation Wallet (TW)

1. Mode signed up and used by participants with the program



- Overall, more respondents signed up for a TriMet reduced fare pass (74%) and Uber or Lyft service (59%) (either signed up at the fair or some other time), with a smaller, but still sizable percentage of participants signing up for bike share (29%) and e-scooter share (28%) services.
- With regard to the mode usage, 90% of respondents used the TW on TriMet services. Over half of respondents (52%) used Uber or Lyft and 31% of them used taxi services, compared to 12% for bike share and 15% for e-scooters.
- For a number of services, including Uber or Lyft, bike share, and e-scooter services, sign-up percentages were considerably higher than usage.

2. Trip purpose for each mode that the respondents used the program



- Shopping (e.g., grocery shopping) and errand trips were the most frequent trip type for people who used the TW for TriMet (86% used TriMet for this purpose at least once), Uber/Lyft (47%) and taxi trips (42%). The percentage of e-scooter users (33%) taking shopping/errands trips was higher than for bike share users (11%). For bike share and e-scooter usage, recreation and exercise were the primary trip purposes.
- Moreover, TriMet (71%) and taxi (24%) played an important role in helping respondents go to or from medical appointments.
- For social/recreation/dining trips, over 60% participants used TriMet, over 40% used Uber and Lyft, and around 30% to 40% used taxis, bike share and e-scooters.

3. Other usage highlights

- Transit pass sign-up:** 20% participants signed up for an annual reduced fare pass, 11% for monthly reduced fare pass, and 53% for regular reduced fare pass (pay-per-ride at 50% off), while 17% did not sign up for a reduced fare pass. Among respondents choosing the TriMet annual fare pass, the use of other services was limited. Also, compared with the pre-survey, people who were frequent TriMet riders before TWRAH were more likely to choose the annual pass option with the TW than other TriMet pass holders.
- Age effect on sign-up choice:** 32% to 34% of those 55 years of age or older signed up for the annual pass, compared to 11% of those under age 55.

II. Highlights of the advantages of TWRAH

1. Cost saving

- 97% responses indicated that they saved money on normal transportation costs with TW and 95% agreed that managing their monthly budget was less stressful because of the TW.
- Many program participants intend to cut back on these services after spending down TW money: 56% of TriMet users, 61% Uber/Lyft users and 49% taxi users reported they would use the services less after using up TW money. Further, 47% of bike share users, 57% of e-scooter users, and 44% of taxi users said they would no longer use these modes after spending all the money, higher than Uber/Lyft (28%) and TriMet (2%).

2. Increased mode usage frequency with the program

- For each mode, over half of respondents indicated that they did increase the frequency of using that mode with TW. (89% and 85% respondents indicated that they used TriMet and Uber/Lyft more due to the TW, compared to 75% for taxi, 62% for bike share, and 66% for e-scooter.)
- Without TW, 62% of them indicated that they would walk more, while 48% reported they would use TriMet more and 26% would drive more. Also, 16% indicated they would take Uber or Lyft more, 14% would bike more, and 11% would take taxis more.

3. The usage of new mobility services with TWRAH

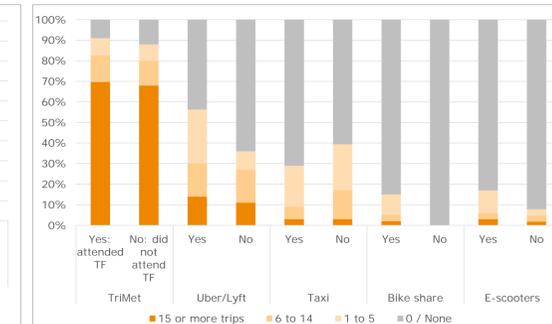
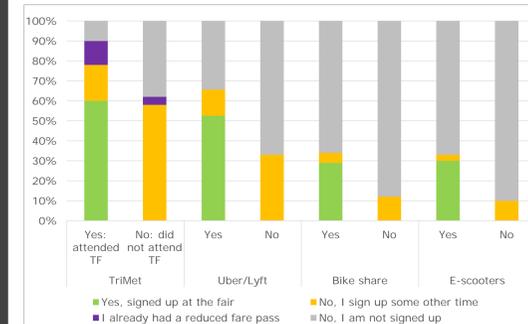
- 48% of respondents agreed they tried using new modes (like bike share, e-scooters etc.) with TWRAH
- Overall, the percentages of signing up and using all these modes from those who agreed (that TW program helped them try using new modes) were higher than respondents who disagreed.
- Half of participants had more opportunities and options to use the mode(s) that they may have not used before.

4. Access to more places/activities

- The majority of respondents perceived that TW helped them get to more places than they otherwise without the TW (e.g., 86% agreed the program helped them go to doctor appointment otherwise they could not have gone to).

5. Transportation Fairs (TF) effects

- 220 (79%) out of 278 respondents reported they attended one of the seven TFs. The results suggest that the participants benefited from attending the Fair where they could learn about how to sign up and use different modes



- TF attendees were much more likely to sign up for a discounted TriMet pass, as well as for Uber/Lyft, bike share, and e-scooter services

- TF attendees were more likely to actually use Uber/Lyft, bike share and e-scooters, and less likely to use TW funds on taxi trips. However, many who signed up for bike share and e-scooters never used the services.

Conclusion

- The findings signify some level of effectiveness of this program in providing more mobility options and enhancing accessibility for low-income residents.
- One aspect would be to improve the way information about the program and new mobility usage is conveyed, specifically for those who never use phone apps to travel around. Another aspect would be to explore participants' experiences when using different services.
- Safety concerns about bike share and e-scooter share services and age-related barriers (e.g., physical ability) from participants suggest that transportation agencies may be limited in their promotion of new mobility without further strategies to address perceptual and objective barriers in future programs.

Acknowledgements

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