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Webinar: The Impact of Ride Hail Services on the Accessibility of Nonprofit Services

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The Impact of Ride Hail Services on the Accessibility of Nonprofit Services

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Research Question

- How are "ridehail" services like Uber and Lyft, also known as transportation network services (TNCs), shaping access to services offered by nonprofit organizations?

- What is the impact of TNCs on mobility and equity?

Literature Review

- Nonprofits are partners with government in delivering social services (Grønbjerg, 2001; Salamon, 1995; Smith & Lipsky, 1993).

- Nonprofits are mission-driven, tax-exempt organizations.

- Over 1.5 million registered nonprofits in U.S., but most are quite small with few or no paid staff.

Literature Review

- Rise in privatization and pressures to "shrink government" has led nonprofit and community organizations to provide services once supported by government directly.
  - (childcare, employment training and services, health care, addiction services and recovery, unhoused population, mental health care, food distribution)

- Partner with government through contracts, grants or individual or foundation philanthropy.

Literature Review

- Yet, distribution of nonprofit organizations and services in lower income communities is uneven, perpetuating patterns of inequality.
    - Organizations tasked with serving vulnerable communities more likely to be found in wealthier neighborhoods (Marwell and Gullickson 2013).
    - Nonprofits in lower-income neighborhoods more likely to fail (Clifford 2018).
    - Latinx communities underserved by nonprofit organizations (Roth and Allard, 2016).

Literature Review

- "Taken together, these findings indicate that initiatives to strengthen faith-based and community-based nonprofit organizations are critical steps in achieving a sound public safety net and increasing the availability of assistance to poor populations" (Allard, 2008, p. 91).

Literature Review

- Where do TNCs fit in?

- Expected to dramatically change community mobility and the accessibility of services they seek.

  - Help people make medical appointments (Powers, Rinefort, & Jain, 2016).
  - Less biased than traditional taxis (Brown, 2018).
  - But, lower income individuals are less likely to use TNCs than wealthier individuals (Conway et al., 2018).

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Research Design

- Exploratory study of nonprofit leaders and clients in Seattle Metro
  - Metro Seattle is made up of the cities of Seattle, Tacoma and Bellevue, along with King, Snohomish and Pierce counties.
  - Four million people.
  - Robust public transportation system with buses, lightrail, commuter rail and ferries.
  - Early adopter of TNCs and other technologies.

    - Source: U.S. Census Bureau

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Seattle
Frequent Transit Network

Bus and rail service every 15 minutes or better, all day.

North

When is Frequent Service Provided?

	Monday–Friday	Saturday	Sundays & Holidays	Evenings (6-10 pm)
Central Link light rail	+	+	+	+
South 2	+	+	+	
North 2 & 13	+	+	+	+
South 3 & 4	+	+	+	
North 3 & 4	+	+	+	
5	+			
7	+	+		
8	+			
10 & 12	+	+		
15 & 18	+	+		
21 & 22 & 56	+			
23 & 124	+			
26 & 28	+			
30 & 31	❶			
36	+	+	+	
41	+			
43	+	+	+	
44	+	+	+	
48	+	+	❶	
49	+	+	+	
54 & 55	+			
66 & 67	+	+	❷	
70	+			
71 & 72 & 73 Locals	+	+		
71 & 72 & 73 Expresses	+			
98 South Lake Union Streetcar	+	+		#
Seattle Center Monorail	+	+	+	#
120	+	+		
150	+	+		
255	+			
345 & 346	+			
347 & 348	+			
358	+	+		–
372 & 522	+			
511	+			
545	+			
550	+	+		

Less frequent service when left blank.
| every 15 min
+ every 10 min
❶ Mon-Fri only
❷ Mon-Sat only
Fri & Sat only
– Does not operate

Many routes continue beyond what is shown on the map with less frequent service.

Many routes not listed have frequent service during rush hours.

Downtown Seattle Routing

1st Ave   10-12
3rd Ave   2-3-4-5-7-13-15-18-21
22-23-26-28-36-54
55-58-70-120-124
Transit Tunnel (under 3rd Ave)
Central Link (ends at Westlake)
41-71-72-73-150-255-550
4th/5th Ave   511-545
Battery/Wall Sts   5-358
Bell/Blanchard Sts   26-28
Virginia/Stewart Sts   70
Pike/Pine Sts   10-43-49
Spring/Seneca Sts   South 2
Marion/Madison Sts   12
James St   South 3-4
S Jackson St   7-36

Through Routes
Ride through without changing buses. See schedules for details.

2 South ↔ 13
7 ↔ 49   10 ↔ 12
15-18 ↔ 21-22-56
5 ↔ 54-55
26 ↔ 124
28 ↔ 23
36 ↔ 1   43 ↔ 44
345 ↔ 348
346 ↔ 347

Key

Major Transfer Point
Street/couplet
No/Limited stops
Stop
Streetcar line
Stop
Rapid rail line
Station
Transit Tunnel

511 stops at 145th St and 45th St only in non-peak direction on weekdays.

41 does not stop on I-5 between Northgate TC and Downtown Seattle.

When 70 is not operating 71-72-73 operates locally on Eastlake Ave E.

358 to Aurora Village
511 to Lynnwood
372-522 to Woodinville
255 to Kirkland
545 to Redmond
550 to Bellevue
150 to Kent via Southcenter
Central Link to SeaTac/Airport
120 to Burien TC

Research Design

- Ten semi-structured interviews with eight nonprofit service providers, and 10 clients of those organizations.

- All done by Zoom or phone due to Covid (limited client accessibility).

- Coded based around themes of opportunities and challenges to using TNCs and other modes of transportation, and impacts on independence and social activities.

Findings

- Both clients and nonprofits agreed that current transportation options leaves gaps for vulnerable populations.

- Both groups also agreed that TNCs can help fill some gaps, but leave others challenges in place.

Findings - Clients

- Vulnerable communities do use TNCs at times, especially when they are organized and paid for by others.

- Uber/Lyft offer opportunities for increased mobility since they come right to your location, and are seen as friendly and on time.

- More convenient than access shuttles (paid for by county and need to be booked in advance).

Findings - Clients

- Uber/Lyft continue to see challenges in:
    - Accessibility (esp for people who have wheelchairs)
    - Lack of ability to use the app, or have a credit card to use app
    - Cost (unless paid for)

Findings - Clients

- *"I do appreciate the Uber vehicles. It's, I've had them take me over to Bellevue once or twice, just so I can get some shopping done and then I call them up and wherever they drop me off. And when I called press the appropriate key on my phone, boom, they were there like within two, three minutes."*

- *"The main problem I have living on Social Security at the moment is I don't have the type of funds to go on Uber on a regular basis."*

Findings - Organizations

- Uber/Lyft do provide organizations support for their clients
  - Supplement volunteer drivers or community/organization shuttles
  - The "first and last mile."
  - To fill in where other transportation supports leave off (bus passes, Metro Access, etc.).
  - Good for access to areas outside of areas covered by other options.

Findings - Organizations

- The cost in time and money is significant
  - High capacity needs of organizations to help coordinate rides.
  - Cost to organizations unless supported by grants.
  - "Credits" sometimes given to clients may not be enough to cover full cost of ride.

"Uber rides are much more time intensive for staff to do as they serve essentially as a smartphone for a rider who does not have a smartphone." – nonprofit leader

Equity and Access

- As transportation policy is being adapted to the rise of new technologies, need to recognize the impact of vulnerable communities.

- Nonprofits ARE using TNCs, as are their clients, but currently only to fill gaps left by other sources (bus passes, etc.).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Increase outreach to under-served communities

- Immigrant communities, ESL communities and communities of color still not being adequately served.

    - Nonprofits and government officials can collaborate with organizations serving these communities to partner to provide support.

    - Equity in Funding
        - Direct government grants to nonprofits serving vulnerable populations.

Encourage and Train Nonprofit Managers to Use TNCs

- Better understand client needs.

- Training for service providers.

- TNCs to fill specific gaps.

Subsidies Are Necessary

- Costs to organizations and clients is not insignificant. Government subsidies to support TNC use can help fill gaps not met by other modes.

- Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC program) allows nonprofits to be sub-recipients, but can't apply directly. Remove this barrier.

- Education for private foundations/philanthropy.

Make Technology More Accessible

- Promo codes for clients.

- App development (i.e. Lyft Business for health providers).

- Use of tablets at nonprofits to book rides.

Wheelchair Accessibility

- Require increased availability of wheelchair-accessible vehicles.

- Increase use of TNCs for clients not using wheelchairs, allowing other modes to be used more frequently by those with.

Summary

- TNCs can help to fill gaps for vulnerable and under-served populations.

- Some nonprofits using TNCs for client support, others haven't even considered it.

- Will require subsidies to be sustainable for organizations and clients.

- TNCs should be considered when designing and updating plans for transportation networks.

Questions?

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