

# RTA LAST-MILE MOBILITY PILOT IN BEDFORD PARK

December 2022



**Regional  
Transportation  
Authority**

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# Background

The 2018 – 2023 Regional Transit Strategic Plan, *Invest in Transit*, articulated three overriding goals for the region. The third goal, *Stay Competitive*, focuses on the vital role that transit plays as a part of the region’s mobility network and promotes strategies for adapting to the evolving needs of riders. A component of this strategy is to test how technology and partnerships with new mobility providers can improve conditions for riders in traditionally difficult to serve transit markets such as the last-mile of reverse commute trips.

As a part of this effort, the RTA set out to pilot partnerships with mobility providers in Oak Brook in DuPage County and the Bannockburn Lakes complex in Lake County, testing out different types of services, on-demand shuttles, new technology, modal concepts and Transportation Network Companies (TNCs). The pilots were designed to serve the last-mile of commutes traveling from the City of Chicago out to suburban job locations via Metra.

In June 2018, the Village of Bedford Park utilized funding through Cook County’s 2018 Invest in Cook program to partner with Antero Group, Shared-Use Mobility Center, and the Active Transportation Alliance to develop a Last Mile Mobility Study and Action Plan. The goals of this effort were to: 1) define the regional and last mile challenges impacting mobility in Bedford Park; 2) assess Bedford Park’s last mile challenges; and 3) develop and evaluate a toolkit of potential last mile solutions. More than 400 local and regional stakeholders were engaged in this effort through variety of activities including Resource Group meetings, an employee survey, and a Last Mile Mobility Demo Day. This effort produced a Last Mile Mobility Study, released in July 2019, and a Last Mile Action Plan, released in June 2020.

RTA Staff actively participated as a member of the project study Resource Group, was a sponsor of the Last Mile Mobility Demo Day held in May 2019 and has been engaged with technical support for development of a pilot program recommended by the plan. Additionally, the Connect2Work pilot aligns with the RTA Strategic Goals:

- Deliver Value on our Investment – funding that includes local and regional partners in Cook County and the Village of Bedford Park.
- Build on the Strengths of our Network – improving the accessibility and connectivity offered by existing transit infrastructure through focused last mile improvements.
- Stay Competitive – testing new technology, modes, and communication to better serve customer needs and better understand travel patterns.

Cook County awarded a follow-on 2019 Invest in Cook program grant to implement a first-mile, last-mile pilot program focused on improving multimodal access to Bedford Park. The pilot will

test innovative first/last mile and late-night mobility solutions which could later be scaled up to other industrial areas throughout the region. The pilot had the following goals:

- **Mobility Goals**
  - Reduce traffic congestion by providing alternatives to solo driving.
  - Increase transit ridership and the use of shared modes of travel.
  - Expand 24/7 access to/from the Bedford Park-Clearing Industrial Area.
- **Economic Goals**
  - Improve workers' access to opportunity in Bedford Park.
  - Reduce commuter's transportation costs.
  - Expand employers' workforce access.
- **Learning Goals**
  - Collect data that can be used to evaluate and compare the performance of different first- and last-mile mobility solutions.
  - Produce innovative and scalable business and partnership models for delivering mobility services.
  - Encourage a behavioral shift to more sustainable modes of travel.

Antero Group was hired by the Village of Bedford Park to manage the RFQ for pilot vendor selection as well pilot oversight. Antero Group's work included scope identification; determining pilot goals; drafting RFQ; negotiating with vendors; marketing the program; providing outreach to local businesses, CTA and Pace; conduct analysis of the pilot program; determine pilot next steps.

An RFQ for the *Connect2Work* (C2W) Pilot Program was released on January 21, 2020. The Village received 11 responses, and eight proposals received interviews. The Village completed final evaluation and negotiated with vendors.

Responses were evaluated on several criteria:

- General Capacity
- Alignment with Program Goals
- Alignment with Pilot Parameters
- Cost Competitiveness

With a strong combination of service providers and technology companies responding to the RFQ, the Village proposed a pilot with four types of solutions, overlain to provide a comprehensive mobility solution for the 24-hour/7-day job access needs of the Bedford Park-Clearing Industrial Area:

1. **First/Last Mile Service.** A TNC-based solution, similar to RTA's Oak Brook and Bannockburn last-mile pilots, providing subsidized TNC trips, geo-fenced between transit hubs and area employment. The Village procured Uber to provide the service. The Connect2Work program covered 50% of a ride up to \$7.
2. **Late Night Service.** Another TNC-based solution in which commuters received subsidized rides from their place of work to a destination (e.g., 24/7 transit, home) anywhere in Cook County. The Village procured Uber to provide this service.
3. **On-Demand Microtransit.** The Village procured Via to provide on-demand, turnkey microtransit solution within the C2W Pilot Program Service Area. The free shuttle, branded as the Connect2Work Shuttle (C2W Shuttle), was provided within the Village of Bedford Park with connections outside of the Village to the CTA Midway Orange Line station.
4. **Mobility as a Service Platform (MaaS).** RTA funded the Mobility as a Service (MaaS) platform for integrating Uber Ride, Connect2Work Shuttle, plus CTA, Metra, and Pace into a single consumer app. The Village contracted with Moovit to provide the Connect2Work App.

### **Funding Partnership**

The Village of Bedford Park committed \$200,000 of Village funds for pilot operations and the 2019 Invest in Cook grant provided \$200,000. Based on the strong interest represented by the response of a variety of service providers, and alignment of the pilot goals with RTA's interest in new last-mile mobility solutions for suburban job connections, discussions were held with the Village for an RTA contribution of \$200,000.

RTA's \$200,000 contribution funded the Moovit contract (MaaS component) of the pilot for up to 2-years. The RTA felt that this contribution best fit its strategic plans since the agency has previously conducted two last mile pilots.

Village and Cook County funding were used to provide the TNC and on-demand services, marketing and administration.

### **Pilot Structure**

All contracts related to the pilot were issued by the Village, with an initial one-year period, with options to renew for a second year. An IGA between RTA and the Village provided RTA funding for the MaaS component, as a discrete element of the pilot.

The transit hub at Midway was the primary connection points for the last-mile service.

## Program Goals

After procurement of all vendors, the Program Goals were refined to the following:

- Improve workers' access to/from Bedford Park
- Expand access to public transit and shared mobility services
- Identify ways to improve and expand upon this pilot

## Program Execution

The Connect2Work (C2W) pilot program started with a soft launch on December 28, 2020.

The Connect2Work app was a “white label” app provided by Moovit that included real time information for CTA, Pace, free C2W Shuttle (operated by Via), and Uber.

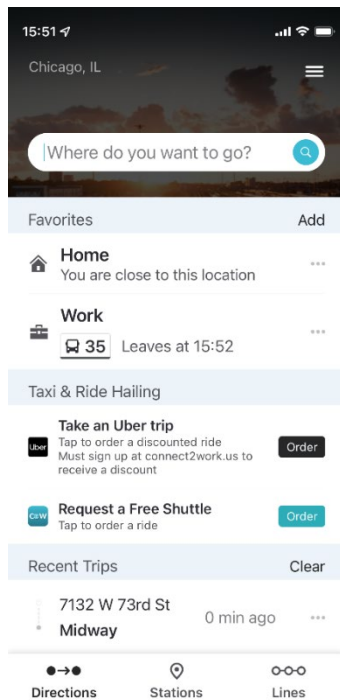


Figure 2 C2W App Front Screen

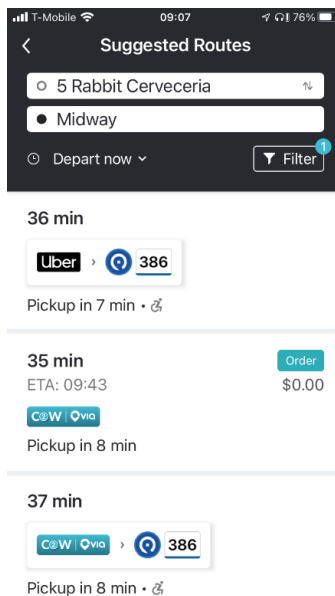


Figure 3 C2W App Trip Planner with C2W Shuttle

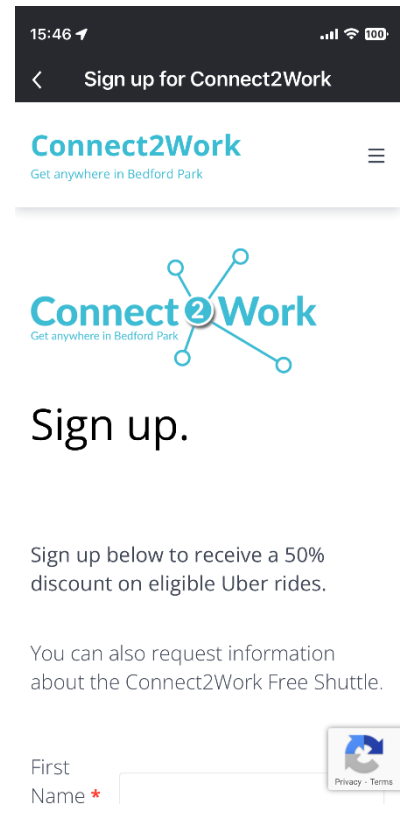


Figure 1 C2W App Sign Up Page

The C2W app also provided a trip planner, deep links to the Via Free Shuttle App (C2W Shuttle) and Uber App. The MaaS app initially allowed users to plan trips with CTA and Pace and Uber for the last mile portions. A couple of months into the pilot, the Via Shuttle was added to trip planning option.

The C2W website was a clearinghouse for information on the program and the locations to sign up for the C2W Shuttle and register for subsidized Uber rider. Users were pushed from the App to the C2W website where they had to sign up in the Uber app to register for subsidized rides. Later on, the signup page was included in the C2W App.

Over time, the C2W Shuttle users bypassed the MaaS app and consulted the C2W Shuttle app directly for service when in Bedford Park and at the CTA Midway Orange Line Station.

## Service

Service began on December 28, 2020 during the pandemic. First/Last Mile Service, provided by Uber, operated Weekdays 6am-9pm. Connect2Work Shuttle service, provided by Via, operated from 6am to 8pm. A sedan, which only had the capacity of three customers, was used by Via to provide the service but was restricted to two customers at a time due to the pandemic. Via shuttles were branded with a Connect2Work sticker. Late Night Service, provided by Uber, operated Weeknights 9pm-6am, which provided 24 hours weekday coverage. Both services were used consistently by customers for hundreds of monthly trips, as shown in data provided by Via and Uber to Antero Group and Bedford Park as shown in Figures 5-7.

Changes in the service were made on July 1, 2021. Due to rider interest and lower weekly spend-down on the project budget than originally projected (because of the pandemic), the following changes were made:

- **First/Last Mile Service** – Extended to weekends 6am-9pm
- **Late Night Service** - Extended to 9pm-6am, which provided 24-hour coverage everyday
- **Connect2Work Shuttle** – Eliminated off peak operation such that the service was provided only 6am-10am and 3pm-7pm on weekdays. This accounted for the fact that peak times were the most popular times for the C2W Shuttle. At this time, Via also lifted capacity restrictions allowing three customers in each car.

Based on data provided by the operators, the vast majority of the C2W Shuttle trips began/ended at the Midway Orange Line station. Due to pandemic restrictions, a van could not be used. These restrictions did not affect wait times. Service demand -- while good for RTA Last Mile Pilots -- never increased to a level that necessitated a second vehicle. The pandemic drove transit numbers to historic lows, which most likely had an effect on demand. Utilization of the C2W Shuttle picked up the last five months of the pilot due to increased awareness of the program.

The Connect2Work Shuttle continued operating until May 27, 2022, when the initial grant funding from Cook County ran out. Currently the Village of Bedford Park still provides first/last mile service with discounted Uber rides. The Village is currently looking at several options to replace the free shuttle as part of the Connect2Work v2.0.

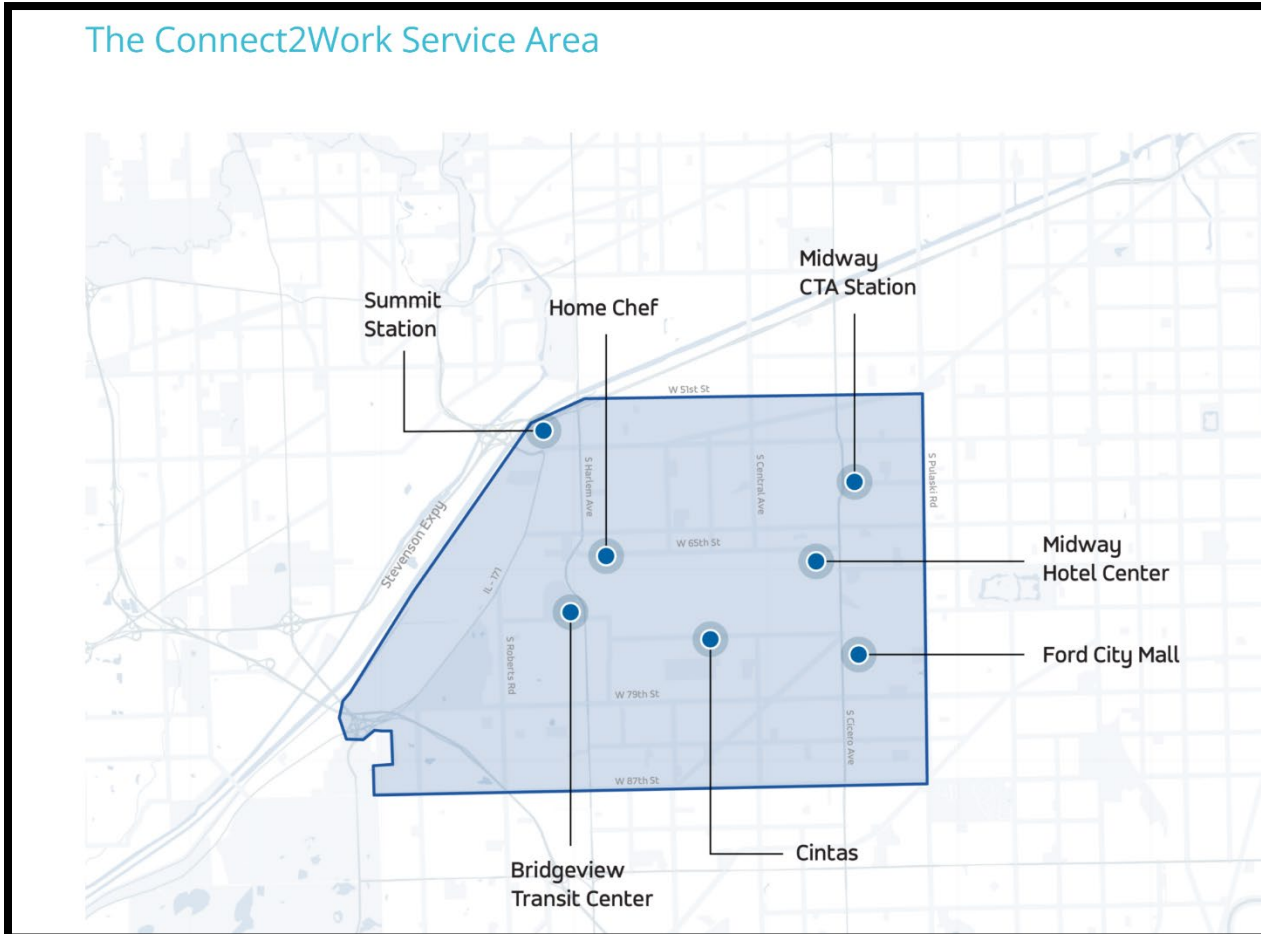


Figure 4 Connect2Work Service Area

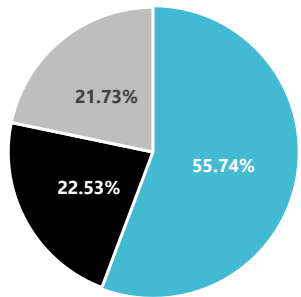
The following Figures 5-7 show usage data from the program. The majority of riders used the Free Shuttle. This was consistent during the duration of the last months of the pilot. Late Night usage increased over Last Mile rides. This is due to the expanded times.



# Rides completed by service type



The Free Shuttle was the most popular service type in terms of the number of completed rides. Demand for Last Mile and Late Night rides was nearly equal, which according to RTA staff, is a unique demand pattern and reflective of Bedford Park’s industrial context. More specifically, there is a relatively high demand for late night service due to the prevalence of companies with multiple shifts.



- **Free Shuttle**  
5,223 total trips
- **Last Mile Rides**  
2,111 total trips
- **Late Night Rides**  
2,036 total trips

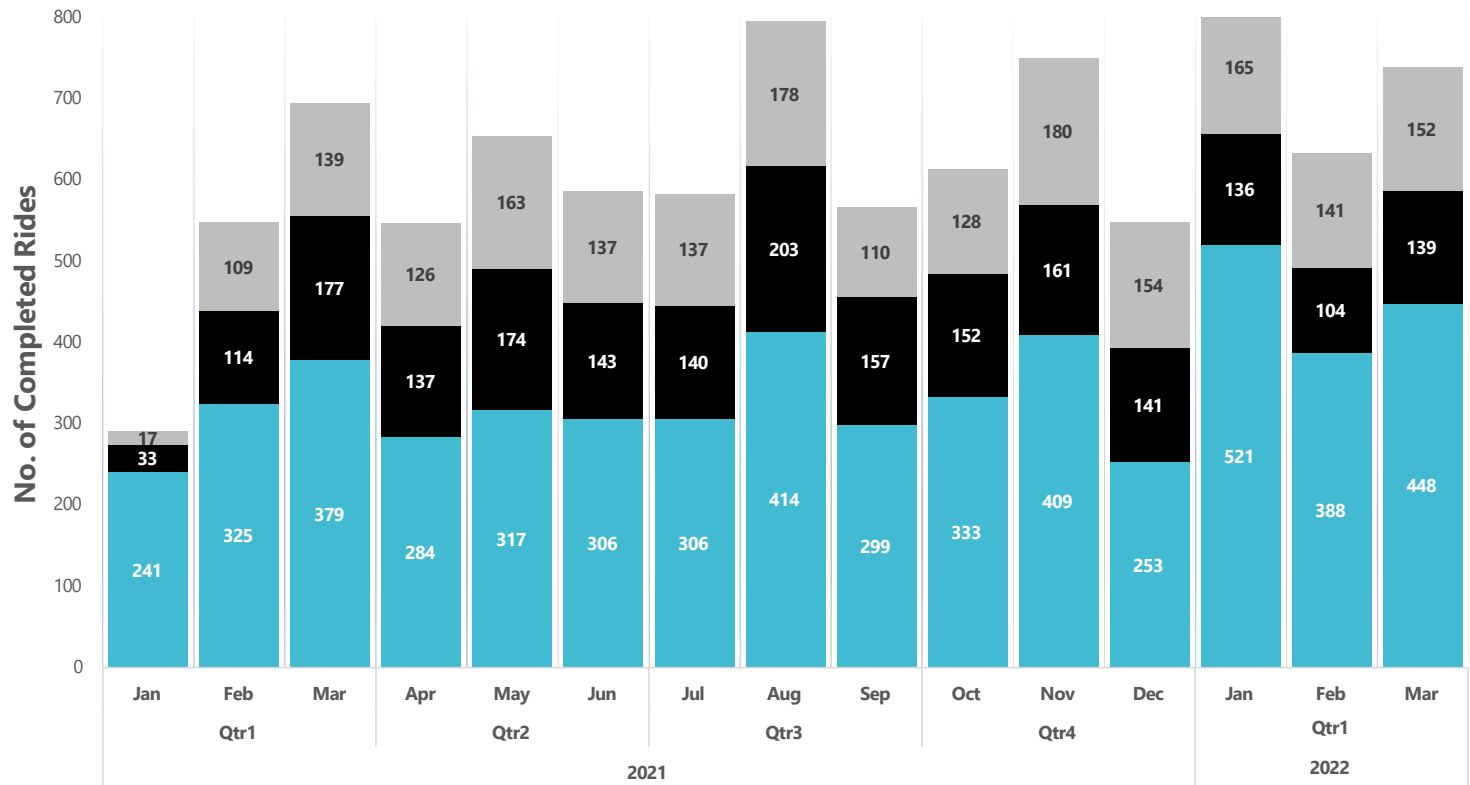


Figure 5 Rides completed by service type

# Rides completed by service and time



The most popular drop-off time for the combined C2W services is between 6am and 10am (AM peak) and 3pm to 6pm (i.e., PM peak). The most common late night drop-off timeframe is between 10pm and 11pm.

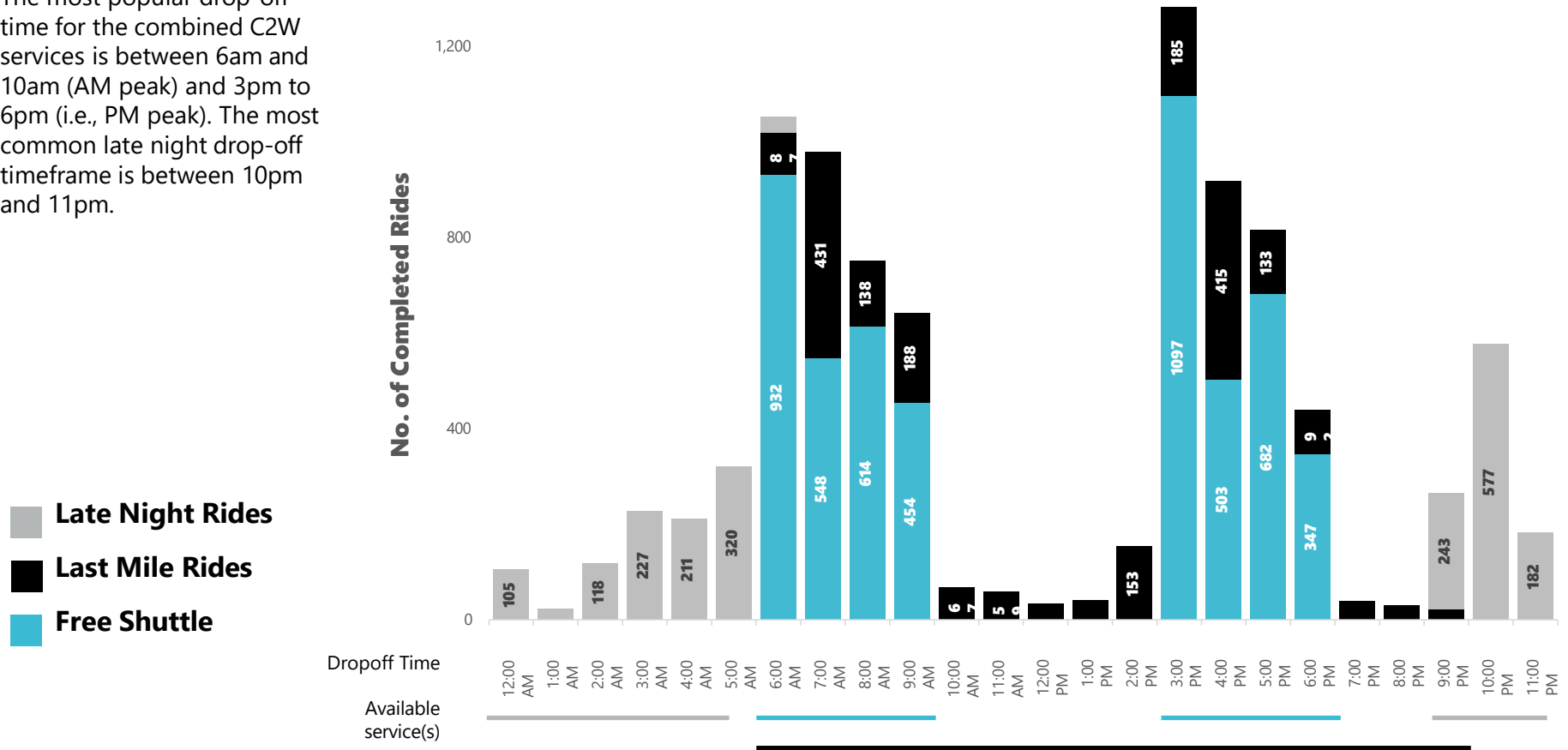


Figure 6 Rides completed by service and time

# Cost per ride/rider 12/28/2020 – 4/3/2022



Billed To	FREE SHUTTLE				UBER							
	Program				Program*							Total (Program + Riders)
Month	Total Ride Fare	Completed Rides	Cost Per Ride/Rider	Utilization	Total Ride Fare	Completed Rides	Cost per Ride/Rider	Cost Per Ride/Rider (last mile)	Cost Per Ride/Rider (late night)	Cost Per Ride/Rider (last mile)	Cost Per Ride/Rider (late night)	
Jan 2021	\$ 15,231.65	262	\$ 58.14	0.50	\$ 353.50	56	\$ 6.31	\$ 5.53	\$ 6.06	\$ 11.14	\$ 15.29	
Feb 2021	\$ 13,170.50	325	\$ 40.52	0.86	\$ 1,428.39	224	\$ 6.38	\$ 5.91	\$ 6.89	\$ 11.98	\$ 17.90	
Mar 2021	\$ 13,503.94	379	\$ 35.63	0.92	\$ 2,042.59	317	\$ 6.44	\$ 6.20	\$ 6.86	\$ 12.85	\$ 18.31	
Apr 2021	\$ 12,834.15	284	\$ 45.19	0.83	\$ 1,742.73	265	\$ 6.58	\$ 6.22	\$ 6.99	\$ 13.47	\$ 21.19	
May 2021	\$ 11,955.38	317	\$ 37.71	0.79	\$ 2,337.76	342	\$ 6.84	\$ 5.96	\$ 7.05	\$ 12.78	\$ 21.27	
Jun 2021	\$ 12,931.80	306	\$ 42.26	0.87	\$ 1,834.59	281	\$ 6.53	\$ 6.24	\$ 6.93	\$ 13.65	\$ 21.18	
Jul 2021	\$ 14,184.45	306	\$ 46.35	0.82	\$ 1,807.68	278	\$ 6.50	\$ 6.24	\$ 7.02	\$ 13.21	\$ 21.99	
Aug 2021	\$ 11,995.90	414	\$ 28.98	1.10	\$ 2,435.56	381	\$ 6.39	\$ 5.94	\$ 6.95	\$ 12.73	\$ 22.84	
Sep 2021	\$ 13,397.30	299	\$ 44.81	0.86	\$ 1,651.07	267	\$ 6.18	\$ 5.73	\$ 6.94	\$ 11.72	\$ 20.64	
Oct 2021	\$ 11,552.45	333	\$ 34.69	1.08	\$ 1,660.26	276	\$ 6.02	\$ 5.39	\$ 6.61	\$ 10.90	\$ 19.23	
Nov 2021	\$ 11,059.50	409	\$ 27.04	1.15	\$ 2,095.21	343	\$ 6.11	\$ 5.49	\$ 6.73	\$ 11.59	\$ 18.43	
Dec 2021	\$ 10,170.45	253	\$ 40.20	1.00	\$ 1,806.19	289	\$ 6.25	\$ 5.38	\$ 6.79	\$ 10.84	\$ 18.66	
Jan 2022	\$ 13,538.87	500	\$ 27.08	1.26	\$ 1,812.28	283	\$ 6.40	\$ 5.41	\$ 6.80	\$ 10.92	\$ 18.47	
Feb 2022	\$ 9,481.59	388	\$ 24.44	1.58	\$ 1,513.66	243	\$ 6.23	\$ 5.68	\$ 6.70	\$ 11.74	\$ 20.00	
Mar 2022	\$ 17,543.58	448	\$ 39.16	1.12	\$ 1,822.54	278	\$ 6.56	\$ 5.89	\$ 6.93	\$ 12.14	\$ 19.91	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 192,550.51</b>	<b>5,223</b>	<b>\$ 36.87</b>	<b>0.98</b>	<b>\$ 26,344.01</b>	<b>4,123</b>	<b>\$ 6.39</b>	<b>\$ 5.81</b>	<b>\$ 6.82</b>	<b>\$ 12.11</b>	<b>\$ 19.69</b>	

\* The Connect2Work Last Mile and Late Night programs provide riders a 50% discount up to \$7.00

Figure 7 Cost per rider



## Marketing

Before the start of the pilot, the Village of Bedford Park publicized the program on their website, while a reach out for the program began with Uber issuing a marketing e-mail to their customers in the area.

Starting in January 2021, Antero Group conducted webinars, reached out to the largest employers, and promoted the services on social media. Several pop-up events to discuss the program with area employees were held.

In the spring 2021, Uber did a marketing push to Uber account holders in the area. This had the largest impact on program growth.

Further refinement of the C2W app allowed communications with users through push notifications, pop-ups and banners. The use of this capability allowed recruitment of users for surveys.

## Connect2Work app

The Connect2Work app (C2W app) averaged 35 to 120 users per week and work was ongoing to improve the customer experience. During the pilot, RTA, Village of Bedford Park and Antero Group worked with Moovit to provide customer updates to the C2W App. The Moovit software was adjusted to promote the C2W Shuttle and Uber rides as a priority with booking those trips initiating in the Moovit Connect2Work App. This was done to promote the micro mobility options above TNC service.

Originally, the Team hoped that Level 2 integration (fare payment), could be added to the App, but both partners were reluctant. Discussions started with the RTA, Moovit, Via and Uber early in operation about pursuing Level 2 integration so that customers would not have to leave the C2W MaaS app to book trips. Both service providers (Uber and Via) were reluctant from the start, even though Moovit had worked with them on Level 2 and Level 3 (single user account works for all partners) integration in other markets. Both vendors felt it was in their best interests to work directly with the customers using their software. In the pilot work plan, setting up the Connect2Work app for payment would be discussed after booking integration.

In April 2021, all discussions on Level 2 integration ended. Remaining integration funds were directed toward Divvy and possibly scooter integration. These modes of transportation would give customers additional options in the C2W application.



Use of the Connect2Work app declined during the pilot, as shown in Figure 8. As regular riders used the service, they started accessing the Connect2Work Free Shuttle and Uber apps directly, bypassing the Connect2Work app. This was an unfortunate result of the lack of Level 2 integration in the Connect2Work app. Due to lower than anticipated usage, the Connect2Work app was shut down February 3, 2022.

# Connect2Work app user per week



Like website visitors and signups, Connect2Work app usage spiked in February, achieving an average of 120 users/week. However, app usage averaged only 291 users/month for Q2. The Connect2Work app is not necessary for riders to book rides. It is therefore possible that riders are choosing to book rides through their preferred app (i.e., Uber or Via) without returning to the Connect2Work app. Activity ceased at the end of January 2022 when the app was sunsetted.

## Marketing Campaign 1

- Webinar (1/14)
- Uber blast email (2/2)
- Social media campaign
- Employer Outreach Toolkit
- Emails to employers
- Cold calls to employers

## Marketing Campaign 2

- Pop-Up Home Chef (4/12)
- Webinar (5/20)
- Uber blast email (5/24)
- Pop-Up Cintas (5/24)

## Marketing Campaign 3

- Emails to employers (8/4)
- Emails to inactive users (9/28)

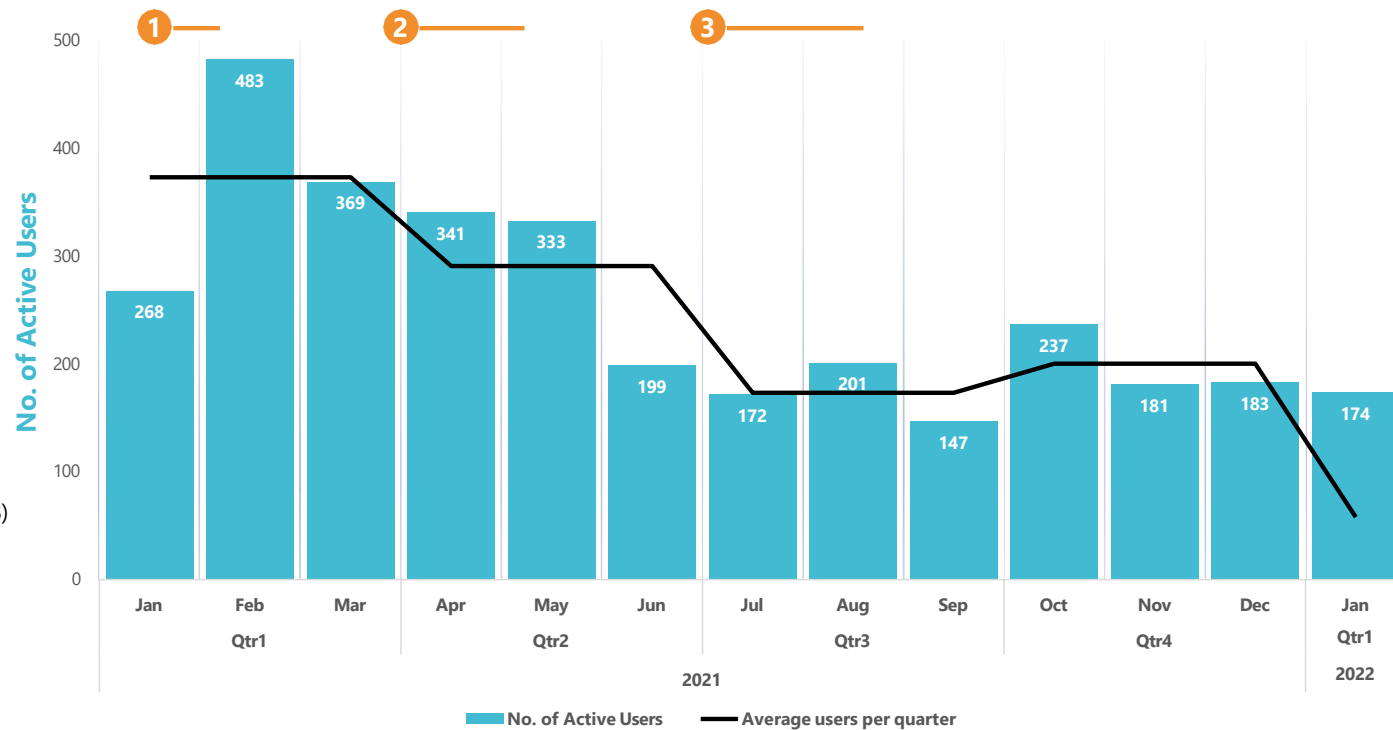


Figure 8 Connect2Work app user per week

## Survey

The Connect2Work Pilot Program rider survey collected responses from March 16 –April 20, 2022. This survey was distributed through the Connect2Work Free Shuttle app and on the Connect2Work website. Although there were 134 responses, approximately 51% of the respondents had not yet accessed either service. This highlights that knowledge of the program and those users who downloaded the Connect2Work app kept it on their phone.

# C2W v1.0 Closeout Survey

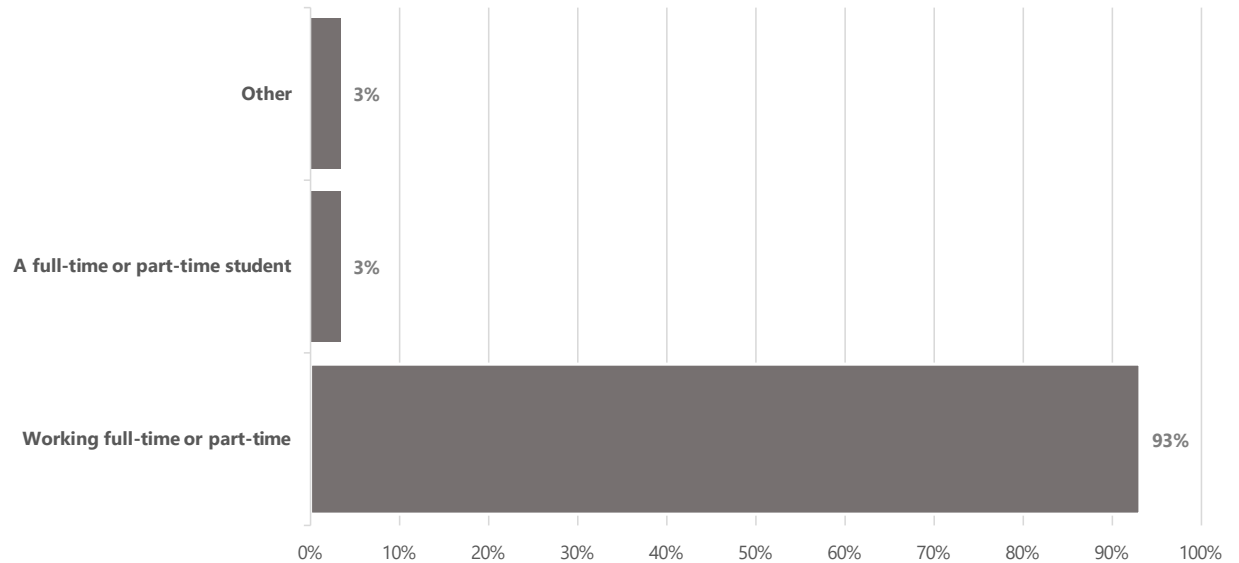
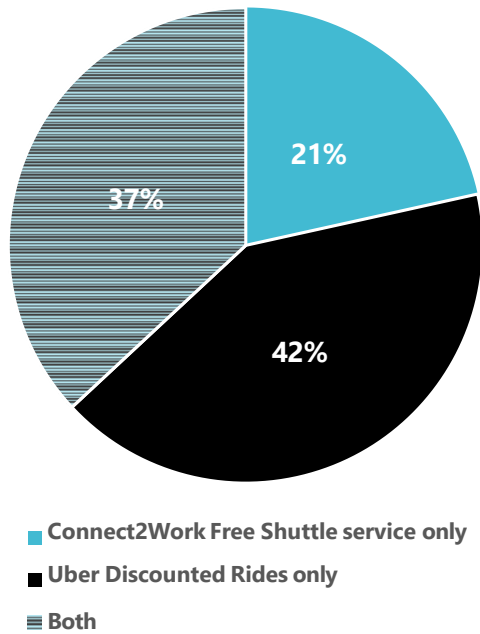
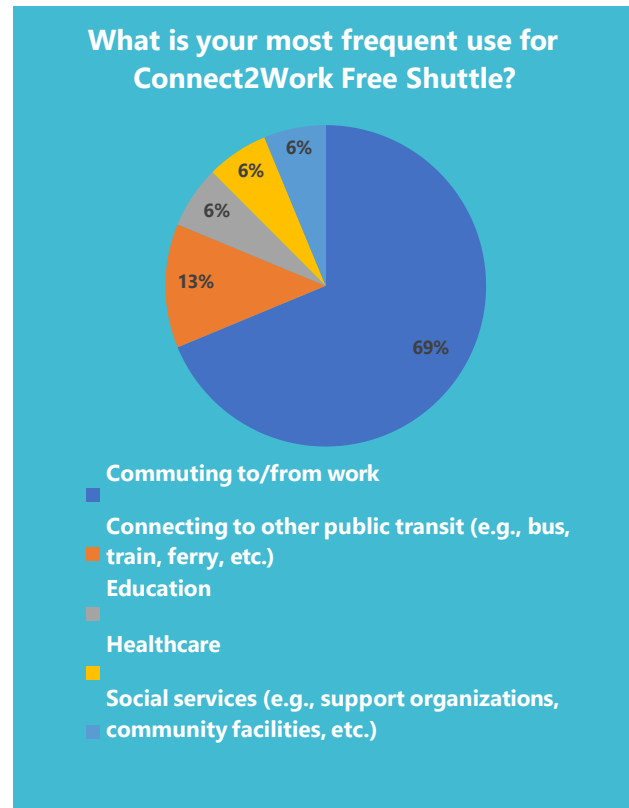


Figure 9 Connect2Work Closeout Survey

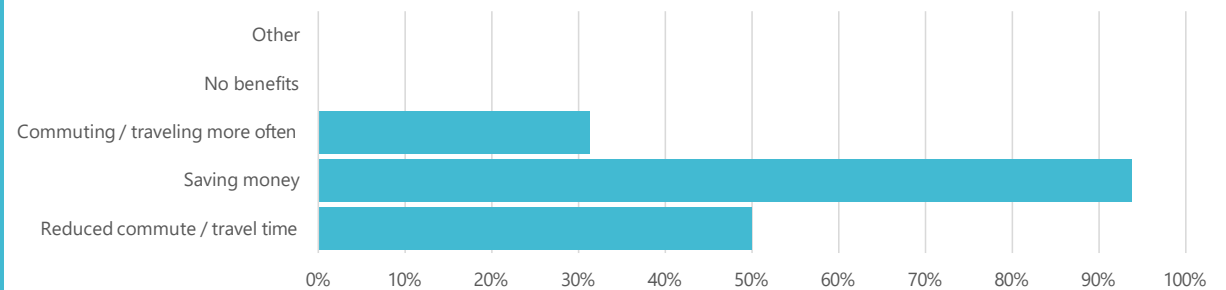
# Free Shuttle Satisfaction & Usage



Riders rely on Connect2Work for affordable commutes to/from work and would be disappointed if they could no longer utilize it.



### What benefits have you seen from using the Connect2Work Free Shuttle?



### How disappointed would you be if you could no longer use the Connect2Work Free Shuttle Service?

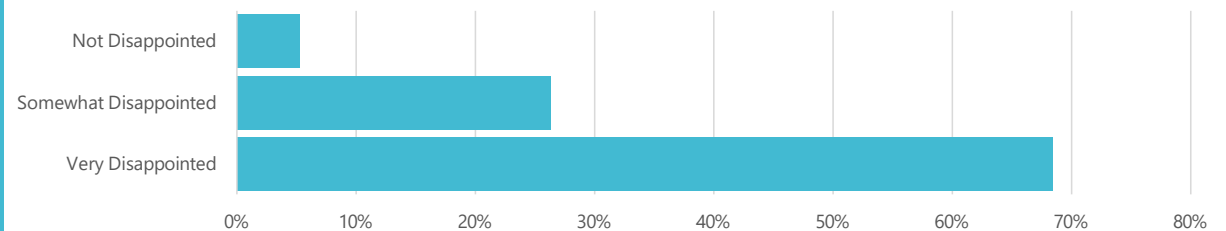


Figure 10 Free Shuttle Satisfaction & Usage



# Uber Discounted Rides Satisfaction & Usage



Riders also rely on Uber Discounted Rides for affordable commutes to/from work and would be disappointed if they could no longer utilize it.

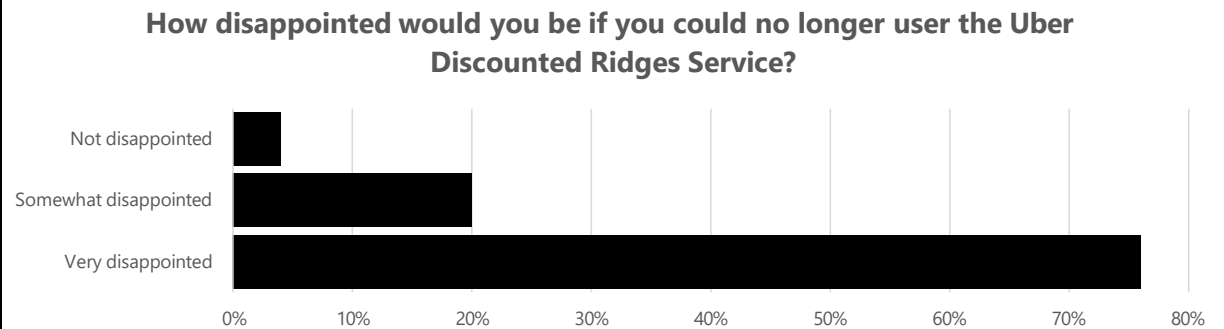
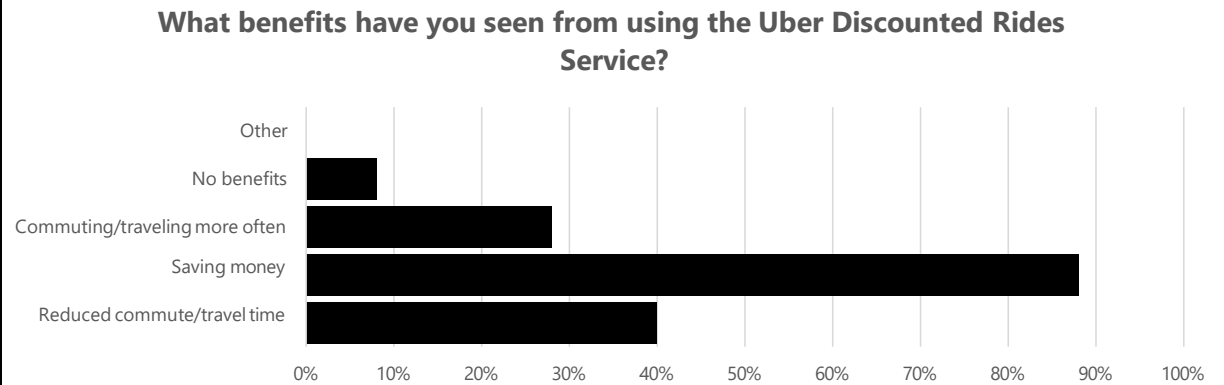
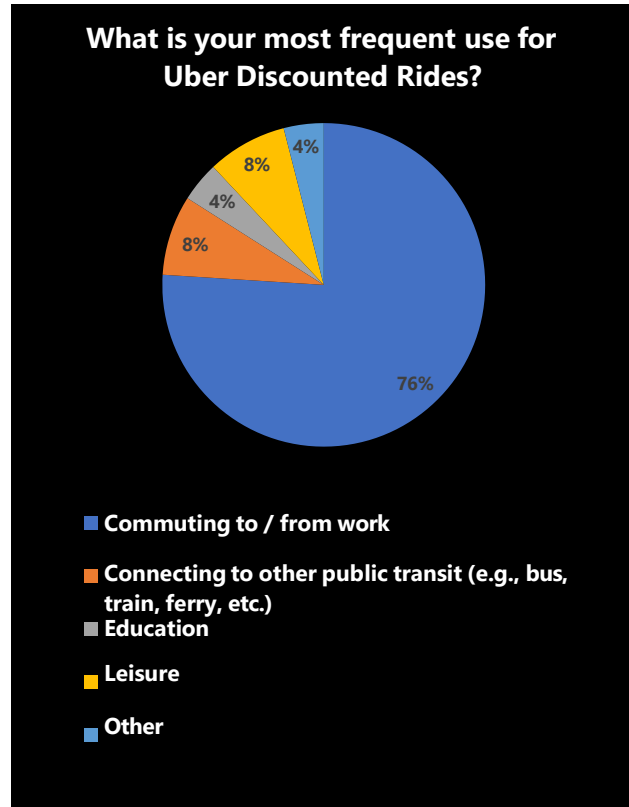


Figure 11 Uber Discounted Rides Satisfaction & Usage

## Key Findings

There were several key findings from this project.

The Bedford Park Pilot saw consistent ridership throughout the pilot, but Connect2Work app usage declined during the pilot (Figure 12). During the pilot, C2W app usage did spike after Uber sent email blasts to their customers in the geofenced area (Figure 13), which showed that many users still used the Uber app.

The pilot launched during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected the way that it could operate due to capacity limitations in place at workplaces and on public transit and rideshare vehicles. That said, the service was used from its initial launch and it appears that reopening and removal of capacity restrictions had a negligible effect on both app usage and ridership. When the region slowly opened up in the Summer and Fall of 2020, C2W app usage and ridership did not increase. This can be attributed to the fact that C2W riders come from areas high on the vulnerability index. They are also coming from areas that are socially disadvantaged which addresses one of the pilot's goals.

One of the key challenges and limitations on program growth was payment integration. All of the mobility service providers in the pilot felt that they could provide MaaS solutions, so there was no incentive to cooperate or yield potential market space to other providers. Integrations beyond basic shared travel information and next vehicle information were not possible in the Bedford Park pilot. Uber and Via both felt that they could provide an all in one MaaS solution and did not want to provide basic information beyond real time information to what they felt were their customers. RTA's conclusion from this experience is that Level 2 integration (fare payment) information can likely only be achieved if it contractually required of service providers.

RTA also found that project partners make decisions based on cost and practical needs of riders. With a low C2W app usage and consistent ridership, the Village of Bedford Park elected to not renew the C2W app and Via Shuttle service. Once riders knew how to use both the Via Shuttle and Uber apps, they no longer had a need for the C2W app. The Village felt that, even though it was funded by the RTA for an additional year, that the C2W app was not needed. In the same assessment, the Village felt that contractually subsidized Uber riders were more cost effective than continuing the C2W Shuttle (Figure 7), which was the main reason for letting the Free Shuttle contract end.

## Lessons Learned

The Bedford Park pilot proved that there is a market for first/last mile trips using multiple private company service providers. The shuttle service provided had higher ridership than the previous RTA pilots, but given the small vehicles and small rider base, the cost still was not

sustainable for Bedford Park and employers in the long run. The following section included key lessons learned while setting up and operating an inner suburban last-mile pilot in partnership with a local municipality.

- 1) **First/Last Mile service provided to industrial areas needs buy in from local businesses.** In the Connect2Work Pilot, Antero Group and the Village of Bedford Park conducted outreach to businesses whose employees used the service. Human Resources departments understood the need, but only the largest job providers considered subsidizing the service. In this case, an 18 month pilot during the COVID-19 pandemic most likely harmed the ability to gather support. This pilot was designed to serve CTA, which had a significant ridership decline during this time. As such, fewer people were using transit in general at that time, which diminished the potential ridership for the pilot.
- 2) **MaaS apps are most successful in areas where there is not a lot of competition.** In the Chicago Region, many companies are looking to gain a foothold in the MaaS market. When there are several companies, most companies, mainly service providers, desire to control communications with customers to ensure they control all aspects of the rider experience: initial communication, notifications, payment and ridership. This goes against the current narrative of MaaS as an open market all in one solution.
- 3) **The municipality (client) has to be upfront with Level 2 integration.** Only Moovit was contractually required to provide Level 2 integration in the pilot. While both service providers could provide Level 2 Integration neither did since they were not contractually obligated to do so.

## Conclusion

The Bedford Park pilot was successful for the RTA in testing partnerships between multiple service providers; working with a local municipality as a lead in providing first/last travel options; and testing a MaaS app. Useful lessons were gleaned from the pilot that have and will continue to inform future activities.

In November 2022, Pace contracted with the Transit App to create a Mobility as a Service platform that will eventually allow regional users to see information about all members of Pace's family of service in one easy-to-use place, improving the customer experience. This is a great next step in the region's mobility offerings.

The lessons learned in Bedford Park, Oak Brook and Bannockburn pilots will inform future efforts by the RTA and others throughout the region. The Bedford Park pilot addressed the challenges of lower density market adjacent to Chicago, using multiple TNC service providers to meet the needs of an industrial workforce. The RTA will continue to look at ways to pilot innovative ideas to improve the last mile trip.