

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-18-539](#), a report to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

The public transit landscape is changing, as advances in technology have enabled more on-demand mobility services, such as ridesourcing and bike-share services. In response, some transit agencies have started to partner with private mobility companies with the aim of offering public transit riders more efficient and convenient options through on-demand services. FTA supports public transportation systems through a variety of federal grant programs.

GAO was asked to review various issues related to such partnerships. This report examines, among other things: (1) the types of partnership projects that selected transit agencies have initiated with private mobility companies and (2) how DOT's efforts and funding and federal requirements may impact such partnerships. GAO interviewed DOT officials and reviewed DOT documents; interviewed 16 local transit agencies and 13 private mobility companies involved in transit partnerships; and reviewed 22 projects initiated by the selected partners, including 5 funded by the Mobility on Demand Sandbox grant program. GAO selected these partners to represent a range of service types and geographic locations; the results are non-generalizable.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making three recommendations including that FTA disseminate information about how partnership projects met federal requirements and how data on partnerships should be entered into the National Transit Database. DOT concurred with the recommendations.

View [GAO-18-539](#). For more information, contact Mark Goldstein at (202) 512-2834 or goldsteinm@gao.gov.

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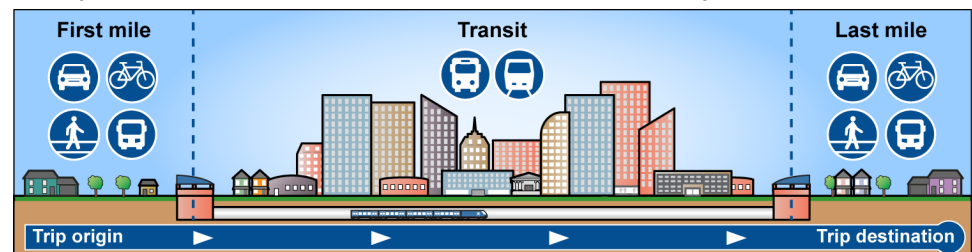
PUBLIC TRANSIT PARTNERSHIPS

Additional Information Needed to Clarify Data Reporting and Share Best Practices

What GAO Found

Some local transit agencies are pursuing partnerships with private mobility companies—including car-share and "ridesourcing" companies such as Lyft and Uber, which provide access to a shared vehicle "on demand"—with the aim of offering public transit riders more efficient and convenient service options. Most of the transit partnership projects that GAO selected (14 of 22) involved private partners providing on-demand transportation for the "first- and last-mile" connections to or from public transit stations (see figure). Local transit agencies use first- and last-mile connections to increase their public transit ridership. Other services provided through selected projects included filling transit service gaps in under-served areas. Most selected projects have not yet been evaluated to determine whether they achieved intended outcomes.

Concept of First- and Last-Mile Connections to Access Public Transportation



Source: GAO. | GAO-18-539

The Department of Transportation's (DOT) efforts, especially the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) initiation of the Mobility on Demand Sandbox program, have facilitated partnerships, but confusion about how to meet some requirements and how to report data pose challenges to implementing projects. In October 2016, FTA announced the selection of 11 projects to receive grants and has since provided assistance to the grantees. FTA also issued clarifications about how certain federal requirements—such as those related to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)—apply to transit partnerships. However, most selected local transit agencies (14 of 16) said that additional information beyond what FTA has already disseminated, including how agencies have successfully structured partnerships and met federal requirements, would be helpful. Collecting and disseminating such information could help FTA be better positioned to respond to changes in the transit industry that could impact its own efforts and goals, such as planning for future Mobility on Demand grants. In addition, most selected local transit agencies reported confusion related to reporting information about their on-demand projects into the FTA's National Transit Database, including confusion about which on-demand project data would qualify for entry. This confusion has led to possible reporting inconsistencies by some local transit agencies. Ensuring that data contained in the National Transit Database are complete and accurate is important, since according to FTA officials, FTA uses these data (1) to apportion certain grant funds to local transit agencies based on factors such as passenger miles traveled, and (2) to track its progress in achieving goals such as promoting efficient transportation systems, among other things.