



City of Columbia

701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201

Department Source: Public Works

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: April 18, 2022

Re: Authorizing Public Works to add a position classification to GoCOMO Transit for Paratransit Van Driver

Executive Summary

Staff is requesting council to authorize the City Manager to add a Paratransit Van Driver position classification/pay plan amendment for GoCOMO Transit in order to hire drivers specifically for paratransit service. This position requires a minimum Missouri Class E driving license. With this new classification, Transit proposes to under hire six of the eleven fulltime vacant Bus Driver positions and use them to assist with paratransit vans, thus reducing the need for CDL drivers. These positions would not replace any current paratransit drivers and will be encouraged to complete their CDL training.

Discussion

Due to steadily increasing demand for paratransit service by Columbia residents and the nationwide shortage of transit drivers, GoCOMO Transit proposes under filling six (6) fulltime Bus Driver positions with the fulltime benefit eligible Paratransit Van Driver position. GoCOMO currently has eleven (11) fulltime and seven (7) temporary driver vacancies, which represents a staffing deficit of approximately 40%. Current drivers have been working twelve (12) hours of mandatory overtime per week since August of 2021 with no anticipated relief in sight.

This position does not require a Commercial Driver License with Passenger and Airbrake endorsements, but does require a Class E license (driving a motor vehicle transporting 14 or fewer passengers (Attachment 1, page 4). These drivers would be able to drive paratransit vans only and would be subject to current city requirements for background checks and drug testing.

Paratransit service is a federally mandated point of origin to destination service for qualified individuals since we have federally funded fixed route service. We are currently receiving approximately ten (10) additional applications for paratransit service per week, and there are currently close to 400 qualified riders for paratransit service. On average, since March of 2022, we receive 200 ride requests per day from various points of origin to medical, employment, and shopping destinations and back to the origin point within the city limits. We use four (4) vans for early morning service, six (6) vans for mid-morning to early afternoon service, and five (5) vans for late afternoon and evening service. This demand requires drivers who could be driving fixed routes to drive paratransit service, which puts more demand on fixed route drivers to maintain our current level of service. Being able to employ paratransit van only drivers would allow additional vans to be used on high demand days and times and reduce the number of fixed route drivers required to cover the need we



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are experiencing. With six (6) paratransit van only drivers, we could also conceivably reduce the number of mandatory overtime hours across the board.

These positions would not displace any current drivers who prefer paratransit service and would be used to fill currently understaffed afternoon and Saturday service demand. As an incentive, these drivers would be given the opportunity to complete CDL training through GoCOMO's current training program and after that be qualified to drive fixed route service in larger vehicles as well as paratransit vans.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: None. No budget amendment is needed as we are under filling current vacant positions

Long-Term Impact: Enter the cost of proposed legislation to the city for years **beyond two**.

Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Reliable Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Resilient Economy, Tertiary Impact: Tertiary

Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Economic Development, Tertiary Impact: Tertiary

Legislative History

Date	Action
	None

Suggested Council Action

Authorize the City Manager to add this position classification to GoCOMO Transit as a means to mitigate current staffing shortage.