

TRANSIT SOFTWARE VENDOR OVERVIEW

July 28, 2026

Project# 30857

To: Gary Stockhoff, PE, Maya O'Neal; Benton Area Transit
From: Nick Meltzer, PE; Amy Griffiths, PE; Kittelson & Associates, Inc
RE: Benton County Transit Program Analysis: Software Operations Vendor Review

Benton Area Transit is exploring opportunities to improve delivery of public transit. Supported by a prior analysis, Benton County is developing an implementation plan that will determine whether they self perform transit operations or continue hiring a contractor through a revised and enhanced contract for services. As part of these efforts, Benton Area Transit is updating their operations software to better meet their growing service needs, improve efficiency, and adapt to newer technological standards. This memorandum supports this effort and summarizes an assessment of transit management software vendors. This assessment will aid Benton County in understanding the advantages and disadvantages of transit software vendors, and prepare them for additional conversations on procurement.

Existing Transit Service

The specific services Benton Area Transit (BAT) provides are listed below. While BAT Lift is collectively marketed as the Demand Response service, it is comprised of three individual services (Paratransit, DD53, and Senior/Disabled Demand Response) with separate revenue streams. As such, each subservice is listed.

- **Coast to Valley Express:** The Coast to Valley Express is a fixed route intercity route that travels between Newport and Albany. The service is shared with Lincoln County, with both agencies operating two routes per day, seven days per week.
- **99 Express:** The 99 Express is a fixed route, intercity commuter bus service between Corvallis, Lewisburg, and Adair Village. It operates 5 days a week, with scheduled runs in the morning, midday and evening.
- **BAT Lift (Countywide):** BAT provides wheelchair-accessible, demand response transportation for seniors (ages 65 and older) and individuals with disabilities throughout Benton County. BAT Lift is a service provided by Benton County for trips starting and ending in Benton County. Riders must be approved in order to be eligible for transit service.
- **BAT Lift (Paratransit):** Paratransit for the Corvallis Transit System (CTS) and Philomath Connection (PC) fixed route services is also provided through BAT Lift. Both paratransit and countywide service operate with the same vehicles and dispatch service. However, BAT Paratransit is funded through CTS and federal 5310 Small Urban funds to provide service for people who live within 3/4 mile of a CTS or PC bus route and have a disability that prevents them from accessing the fixed-route bus service.

- **BAT Lift (DD 53):** DD 53 Services are public or private transportation services provided to individuals with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) receiving services from a Community Developmental Disabilities Program (CDDP) for the individual to gain access to a community-based state plan (K-plan) and waiver services, activities and resources. As the funding source is from social service agencies compared to traditional transportation sources, the ridership and costs are tracked separately.

Transit Software Vendor Needs

Transit operations software is intended to streamline operations for public transit agencies through creating a central platform for qualifying riders, scheduling riders and drivers, enable easier reporting and billing, and in some cases tracking vehicles, and providing customer interfacing requests and reminders. These unique needs vary across the fixed route and demand response services, and finding one software to accomplish everything can be challenging.

Currently, Benton Area Transit does not have direct access to transit operations software. They access the software through their contractor, who uses Ecolane. The current interface is challenging to use and BAT Staff struggle with accessing ridership and billing information.

Table 1 outlines the specific needs of transit agencies in terms of operational software, the applicable mode for the need, and whether it's necessary for their daily functions or optional.

Table 1. Transit Software Vendor Capability Needs

Capability	Description	Commuter Bus (CB) or Demand Response (DR)	Necessary or Desired
Scheduling Drivers and Vehicles	Staff and vehicle scheduling across services.	Both*	Necessary
Scheduling Rides	This includes scheduling and dispatching BAT Lift, Paratransit and DD53 trips.	DR	Necessary
Eligibility Integration	Maintain accounts for riders eligible for paratransit, BAT Lift and DD53 services to facilitate demand-response trip booking. Potential need to integrate with other eligibility tracking software.	DR	Necessary
Reporting	Data collection on trips to support accurate reporting to FTA and to support long-range transportation planning.	Both*	Necessary
Optimizing Ride Efficiency	Identifying opportunities to combine trips to promote efficiency using the software routing algorithms.	DR	Desired

Third Party Integration	Integrate with trip planning apps (like Google Maps and Apple Maps) so riders can plan trips.	CB	Desired
Vehicle Status Integration	Track mileage, vehicle issues and preventative maintenance via electronic device	Both*	Desired
Passenger Accounts and Notifications	Allow for passengers to request rides in a manner other than calling and talking to a person. Provide automatic reminders for scheduled trips.	DR	Desired
Vehicle Tracking	Provide real-time trip information to dispatch and passengers for fixed-route and demand-response services, providing updates on vehicle locations and arrival times.	Both*	Desired

**Notates needs for deviated fixed route services.*

Currently, Benton Area Transit operates both demand response services and intercity fixed routes, also known as Commuter Bus services. As of July 2026, BAT is also exploring a rural deviated fixed route that would increase access to rural communities in Benton County. Transit operational software is not designed for deviated fixed routes, due to the daily uncertainty of deviations. The software can help with scheduling drivers and vehicles, and reporting, and to some degree real time vehicle location.

Transit Software Vendor Assessment

Table 2 documents a preliminary assessment of vendors based on publicly available information (i.e. web searches). Information for the following categories was collected:

- **Product:** The vendor's software product that is described in the table.
- **Capabilities:** The core features and functions the service provides, including its primary use or purpose.
- **Key Advantages:** The main benefits or strengths that differentiate the software from competitors.
- **Key Limitations:** Any known gaps, weaknesses, or unmet needs in the software's capabilities.
- **Cost Structure:** How pricing is organized, including what factors influence cost.
- **Agency Use:** Known agencies in Oregon that currently use the product.
- **Small Agency Representation:** What size agencies does the vendor typically work with?
- **Software Integration/Exclusivity:** Does the vendor require proprietary equipment in the vehicles? Does the software integrate with other vendors' applications?

Additional outreach to vendors—including software demonstrations and reference checks with agencies currently using the product—will be necessary to fully evaluate overall effectiveness. Albany Transit System uses IT Curves and is currently seeking other solutions. Lincoln County did not respond to requests for software use.

Table 2. Vendor Assessment

Vendor	Ecolane	ETA Transit	TripMaster	TripSpark	TSL Tech	Via	Spare	QRyde
Product	Evolution	– SPOT™	– Suite of Modular Software Tools by CTS Software	– NovusDR (Demand Response) – Fixed Route Software	–	– Via Paratransit – Remix	– Paratransit – Spare Fixed Route	– QRyde Cloud
Capabilities	Focused on demand-response services. Includes fixed-route monitoring. Listed capabilities include: – Automated provider management, funding source compliance, and trip assignments. – Automated demand-responsive paratransit scheduling and dispatching. The software looks at each day’s reservations and performs calculations to determine a transit schedule based on customer bookings and vehicle/driver availability. Batch scheduling uses Ecolane’s algorithm factoring in trip cancellations, vehicle breakdowns, driver unavailability, and weather conditions. – Real-time updates via mobile data tablets and real-time maps for riders to use. – Fixed-route monitoring.	Focused on demand-response services. Provides modular solutions to transit agencies’ needs. Listed capabilities include: – Real-time tracking and monitoring capabilities, including automatic passenger counting. – Automated scheduling and dispatching functionalities that clusters trips and allows for manual routing changes. Their web-based scheduling system includes real-time updates and identifies adjustments to demand-response trips in real time. – Tracking websites and apps that keep riders informed with real-time arrival predictions, trip planning, and more. – Keeps track of rider eligibility status. – Tracks revenue and deadhead miles, on-time performance metrics, parametrized reporting. – Option to add on fare collection software.	Focused on demand-response services. Provides modular solutions to transit agencies’ needs. Listed capabilities include: – Automated demand-responsive paratransit scheduling and dispatching that can accommodate changes in real-time. – Track passenger counts, fares, routes, and stops. – Provide tracking updates with real-time updates on vehicle location for riders to view. – Option to add on fare payment collection app.	Includes dedicated demand-response and fixed-route software. Listed capabilities include: – Helps with fixed route scheduling, creating optimized routes and schedules. – Mobile Data Terminals allow for real-time vehicle tracking and accurate reporting. – Provides information to passengers to support trip planning. – The Real Time Dashboard tracks demand response vehicles on the road and re-optimizes the daily schedule to keep efficiency high.	Focused on demand-response services. Includes fixed-route scheduling and monitoring. Listed capabilities include: – Enables real-time vehicle tracking and analytics. – Tools for route planning. – Mobile Data Terminals and tablets equip drivers with navigation, schedule control, dispatcher communication, and passenger accounting tools.	Transportation-as-a-service model with modules serving micromobility, fixed route transit, and demand-response service. Listed capabilities include: – Eligibility Manager automates critical workflows from application to approval to renewal. – Self-serve tools like mobile and web booking, Interactive Voice Response (IVR), and automated texts help customers book and manage rides. – Driver app provides task-by-task routing instructions. – Provides different ways to pay for rides, including credit/debit cards, Apple Pay, and Google Pay. – Real-time vehicle status.	Focused on demand-response services. Includes fixed-route monitoring. Listed capabilities include: – Real-time vehicle status. – Automatic passenger count tracking. – Helps track the full network (fixed route and demand-response in one view). – Allows riders to plan, book, and pay for trips through call-in services or self-serve digital tools (app or web).	Focused on demand-response services. Listed capabilities include: – Tracks client enrollment and eligibility determination – Facilities communication with riders via mobile apps. – Optimizes ride scheduling – Enables transit providers to accurately identify rides that fall within ¾ mile of fixed-route services. – Keeps track of available capacity in the vehicles in real-time. – Electronic payment systems. – Provides reporting dashboards to support audits and funding reports.
Key Advantages	– Benton Area Transit currently uses this software.	– Provides rider-facing tools and streamlined NTD reporting for smaller agencies.	– Modular approach allows agencies to pay just for the capabilities they need.	– Integrates demand-response and fixed route systems.	– Intuitive interface.	– Includes robust tools to facilitate route-planning. – Benton County has used this provider for a short period in the past.	– Integrates demand-response and fixed route systems.	– Cost-per-ride payment structure scales to smaller agencies.

Vendor	Ecolane	ETA Transit	TripMaster	TripSpark	TSL Tech	Via	Spare	QRyde
Key Limitations	– The vendor portal can be challenging to navigate, and may require updated training to utilize effectively.	– May require secondary software for fixed-route transit.	– May require secondary software for fixed-route transit.	– May require proprietary tablet and software for trip planning.	– Website has limited information.	– Geared towards larger providers.	– May be costly.	– May require secondary software for fixed-route transit.
Cost Structure	– Annual fee based on platform license package.	– Unknown	– CTS Software offers an array of pricing options based on your budget, feature and module requirements, fleet size, and the number of office staff who will use the software.	– Unknown	– Unknown	– User-based licenses for planning software; unknown cost structure for dispatch software	– Unknown	– Cost-per-ride
Agency Use	– Benton Area Transit	– Valley Regional Transit	– Rutherford County Transit	– The Jule, Dubuque	– Not listed on website.	– Miami Dade, Capital Metro	– Grand River Transit	– Cherokee County Transit
Small Agency Representation	– Yes	– Yes	– Yes	– Unknown; website states that it is tailored to the complex needs of mid-sized urban, suburban, and rural agencies.	– Unknown; website appears simple compared to other data vendors.	– Unknown; website geared towards more major transit providers.	– Unknown; website geared towards more major transit providers.	– Yes
Software Integration/ Exclusivity	– Unknown	– Requires SPOT-powered mobility system with touch-screen terminals.	– CTS Software’s ParaScope app appears to be able to be downloaded on standard tablets.	– Requires in-vehicle technology (known as The Ranger).	– Requires vendor’s mobile data computers, mobile data terminals, and tablets.	– Unknown	– Unknown; driver apps appear to be able to be downloaded on standard tablets.	– Unknown; driver apps appear to be able to be downloaded on standard tablets.

Vendor Assessment and Discussion

With limited information, Trip Spark, Spare, and QRyde appear to have solutions to address both demand response and fixed route transit services. However, limited information is available via vendor websites, and as such demos should be requested from these companies prior to distributing an RFP for services. Vendor demonstrations can illustrate the user interface, capabilities of the software and answer initial questions from transit agencies, and establishing relationships with vendors prior to the release of RFPs can increase responses from multiple vendors. The capabilities listed in Table 1 can be used as a guide when assessing vendors for their ability to meet BAT's needs. The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) maintains resources for small transit agencies and may be an additional source of information regarding vendors used by other agencies.

In addition, Oregon Procurement Rules allow for Request for Information (RFIs), which enable agencies to seek information from vendors in a non-binding manner to gain more specific information on their services, and make vendors aware of agency needs prior to a more formal procurement. RFIs are helpful in understanding the field of vendors interested in providing services, their capabilities and requirements, and best practices for evaluating the differences among vendors. The Oregon Department of Transportation published a more detailed pamphlet on RFIs for transit technology procurements which can be found in Attachment A.

Requests for Information as Tools in Transit Technology Procurements

Version 3, December 2021

Introduction

This document was developed with funding from the Oregon Department of Transportation Public Transportation Division to give Oregon transit agencies a brief overview of the value that a request for information (RFI) can offer when they procure technology.

RFIs can assist in the following ways:

- By alerting vendors to your pending procurement, increasing the likelihood of getting proposals when issuing a formal procurement process such as a request for proposal (RFP).
- By helping build relationships with potential vendors outside a formal procurement process.
- By starting off with a written description of the planned procurement, conversations with vendors and demonstrations of their solutions are more likely to be useful and targeted to agency needs.
- Where there are known risks or uncertainty in a project, an RFI allows vendors to provide feedback on directions an agency is exploring.
- RFIs can be shared with other agencies that have carried out or are considering carrying out similar procurements, opening the door to getting information from peers.

RFI Dos and Don'ts

Do

- Contact any agencies that are seeking or using similar services or systems to consult on benefits and problems.
- Provide a background on the agency and the overall project.
- Focus on the return on investment the agency is seeking through the procurement.
- Keep the document brief.



Don't

- Include overly detailed or final requirements. You may not know all of the features you want and the RFI gives vendors an opportunity to provide options. Providing a complete scope with all requirements may undermine the RFP since the final requirements should be provided to all interested parties through a formal, equal, and fair process.
- Expect complete candor or the perfect solution from vendors. They may still underestimate costs or fail to provide full transparency about the weaknesses of their solutions. The RFI is only one tool for reducing risk.

RFI Outline

- Introduction and purpose of the RFI
- Agency description, with facts relevant to the procurement. For example, paratransit fleet size in the case of a paratransit-focused procurement.
- Project description, including main benefits and general goals of the system. Don't prescribe the solution, but rather focus on the results you want.
- Key project considerations, such as:
 - Agency concept of operations, into which the solution will be integrated
 - Any unique or noteworthy aspects to the projects
 - Areas where feasibility is still being explored
 - Existing systems or processes the solution will need to be compatible with
 - Features that may require customization or new software development
- Questions, such as:
 - Does the respondent know of other agencies with systems similar to the one described?
 - Can the respondent provide guidelines for anticipating costs, implementation time, training time?
 - What agency capacities need to be in place to support a solution over its entire lifecycle?
 - What common barriers to successful projects have the respondent encountered that could be addressed during the RFP process?
 - Does the respondent's solution use or support transit data standards where applicable (for example GTFS, GTFS-realtime, GTFS-flex, or GTFS-ride)
 - Who would own the data generated by the vendor's solution, and what are the methods to provide all agency-owned data available when requested?
- Parameters for RFI responses:
 - Deadline
 - Any preferred formats
 - Any information that must be included in the response
 - Point of contact for questions about the RFI