

## **GoMonrovia Citywide Mobility Program**

By

Oliver Chi, City Manager, Monrovia California

Patrick Gibson, P.E., PTOE Consulting City Traffic Engineer  
President, Gibson Transportation Consulting, Inc.

Monrovia California is a suburban city with a population of 37,000 located approximately 20 miles northeast of Downtown Los Angeles. Traditionally served by a series of arterial streets and regional freeways, the opening of the Metro Gold Line light rail station has changed the City's connections to the region. With the Gold Line station located just south of the Old Town business district, it was time to think about the transition from pure suburbia to a more urban city with multi-family housing and new employment opportunities.

The City has nearly 2,300 multi-family residential units in the pipeline and over 2,000 jobs have been added to the City in the last three years. Ridership on the Gold Line has grown to over 50,000 daily patrons, so first mile / last mile considerations and station area parking issues were potential problems in search of a solution.

### **HISTORIC APPROACH TO MOBILITY**

Like many single-family, low density suburban cities in California, the primary transportation solution was the automobile. The city did have bus transit lines along the arterial street system offered by Los Angeles Metro and Foothill Transit buses, but large parts of the neighborhoods were beyond comfortable walking distances to these routes.

The City offered dial-a-ride service through Monrovia Transit with contracted service using a fleet of nine wheelchair-equipped vehicles. While the service was available to anyone in the City, it was primarily used by seniors and patrons with disabilities. The budget for the dial-a-ride service was almost \$1 million per year with the primary source of funding being state-restricted grant monies. The service carried an average of 3,250 per month (approximately 255 of which were riders with disabilities) at an average cost of \$19.70 per passenger ride.

### **GoMonrovia GOALS**

The existing residents of Monrovia expressed concerns about the rapid expansion of dense housing developments in the City, unlike the current suburban housing stock, and questioned the adequacy of the current transportation system to serve that growth. City Council asked staff to investigate transportation improvements that would:

- Better connect Old Town Monrovia to the Gold Line transit stop at Station Square,
- Provide better options for residents to get around town,
- Provide options to connect Monrovians to job centers in the City,
- Address neighbor concerns about potential increased traffic levels associated with the proposed residential and employment growth, and
- Provide more Monrovians with real, usable public transit options that allowed them to shop, work, recreate, and move within the city.

## **GoMonrovia PROGRAM ELEMENTS**

City staff undertook a comprehensive look at congestion, parking, and other mobility concerns and developed an innovative solution that leverages the strengths of private companies to create the GoMonrovia program. Primarily by redirecting a large portion of the \$1 million spent annually on the local dial-a-ride program that served only 100 people per day, GoMonrovia provides multiple options for short trips around town as well as an alternate local transit service for seniors and riders with disabilities to meet the mobility needs of residents, employees, and visitors within the City.

The key elements of the GoMonrovia program are:

- A partnership with Lyft to provide all non-ADA-related calls for service with subsidized Lyft rides for all trips within the service area
- A modification of the current dial-a-ride service contract to focus on providing all ADA-related calls for service
- A partnership with Lime, a dockless bike-share company that uses GPS-equipped bikes that can be unlocked, ridden, and parked on a first-come, first-served basis for \$1/ride for the first 30 minutes
- The adoption of a licensing requirement to regulate the use of City streets and private property for bike-share and scooter-share companies operating within the City
- A robust marketing campaign, including the installation of banners, signage, and bike parking to implement and promote the GoMonrovia program.

### **Lime**

Lime started with a rollout of approximately 200 bikes at the program commencement in March 2018, which increased to 250 bikes in August. A Lime smartphone app allowed customers to find an available bike on their phones, and then use their phone to unlock and ride the bike.

Bikes were deployed to key locations throughout the community, including the Gold Line station, Old Town Monrovia locations, and the campuses of large employers. Lime hired a Monrovia resident to rebalance the fleet on a daily basis. Ridership data was used to identify additional bike deployment locations.

The cost of renting a Lime bike was \$1.00 for the first 30 minutes and \$0.50 per 30 minutes beyond that initial time. Monthly passes were available for \$29.95 for 100 rides and discounted rides were available for college students and school staff. The bike could be left at the rider's destination.

The LimeBike program was growing in popularity with approximately 50 bike trips per day (a number that increased to more than 100 bike trips per day on Saturday and Sunday) by February 2019, when Lime announced that they had decided to end their dockless bike program in favor of electric bikes and scooters. GoMonrovia is now working with potential bike-share providers to evaluate the deployment of dockless bikes, scooters and electric bikes in the City.

### **Subsidized Lyft Rides**

The City entered into an agreement with Lyft to provide subsidized, flat-fare rides within Monrovia and to nearby medical locations and shopping centers. The attached figure shows the service area of GoMonrovia.

ANTELOPE VALLEY

AZUSA

DUARTE

BRADBURY

MONROVIA

DUARTE

IRVINDALE

AZUSA

MONROVIA TRANSIT GO MONROVIA LIFT SERVICE AREA

**LEGEND**

- MONROVIA TRANSIT GO MONROVIA LIFT SERVICE AREA (Pink dashed line)
- SERVICE AREA BOUNDARY (Purple solid line)
- CITY BOUNDARIES (Black solid line)

0 0.5 1 Mile

DATE: 08/14/2018

ANTELOPE VALLEY

KINNELOA WESA

SIERRA MADRE

ARCADIA

PASADENA

EAST PASADENA - EAST SAN GABRIEL

ARCADIA

ARCADIA

SOUTH MONROVIA ISLANDS

SOUTH MONROVIA ISLANDS

SOUTH MONROVIA ISLANDS

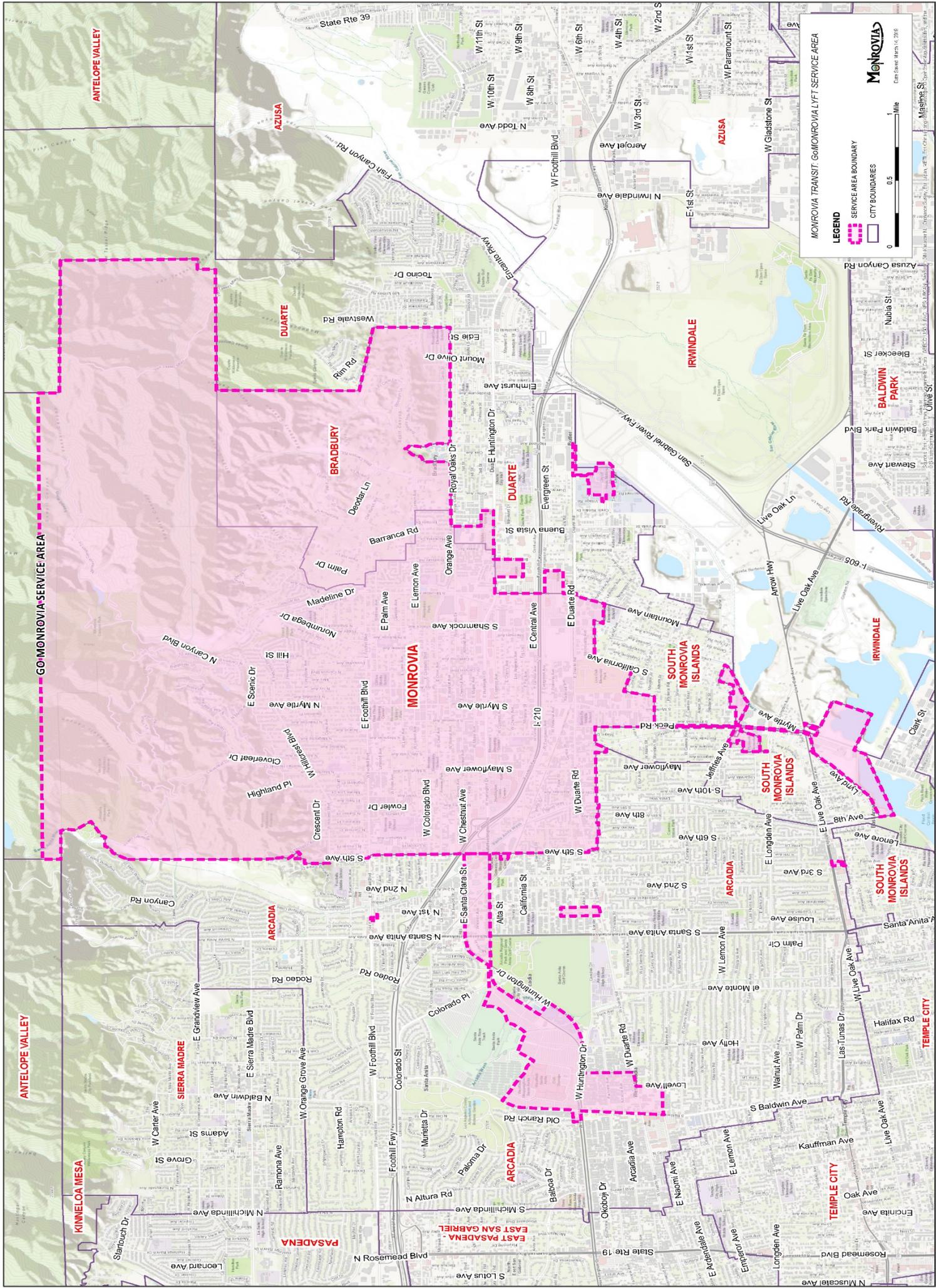
TEMPLE CITY

IRVINDALE

BALDWIN PARK

IRVINDALE

MONROVIA



The intent of the Lyft portion of the GoMonrovia program was to provide an improved connection between residential neighborhoods and employment centers to the Gold Line station. In addition, trips within the City could be made especially to Old Town Monrovia for a discounted fare. The first mile / last mile trips and the internal circulation within the City addressed two of the City Council’s most important goals.

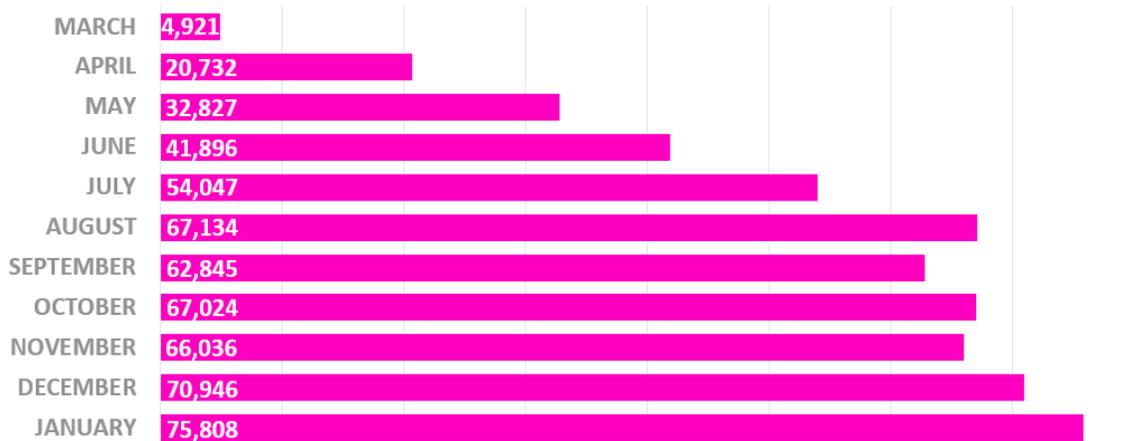
The cost to the user is currently \$1.00 per ride for a Shared Ride or \$3.50 per ride for an exclusive Classic Ride anywhere within the service area. Trips to / from Old Town and to / from the Gold Line station were set at \$0.50 to further incentivize transit and shopping connections. Given the size of the study area and the most popular anticipated destinations, the average cost of a Lyft ride subsidy was thought to be about \$6.00 per ride, which represented a 70% savings compared to the subsidy involved in the City’s dial-a-ride service.

A total of \$640,000 was shifted from the dial-a-ride program to cover the Lyft subsidies, representing approximately 107,000 Lyft rides per year. With a maximum of 39,000 dial-a-ride trips per year, this seemed like a comfortable budget margin.

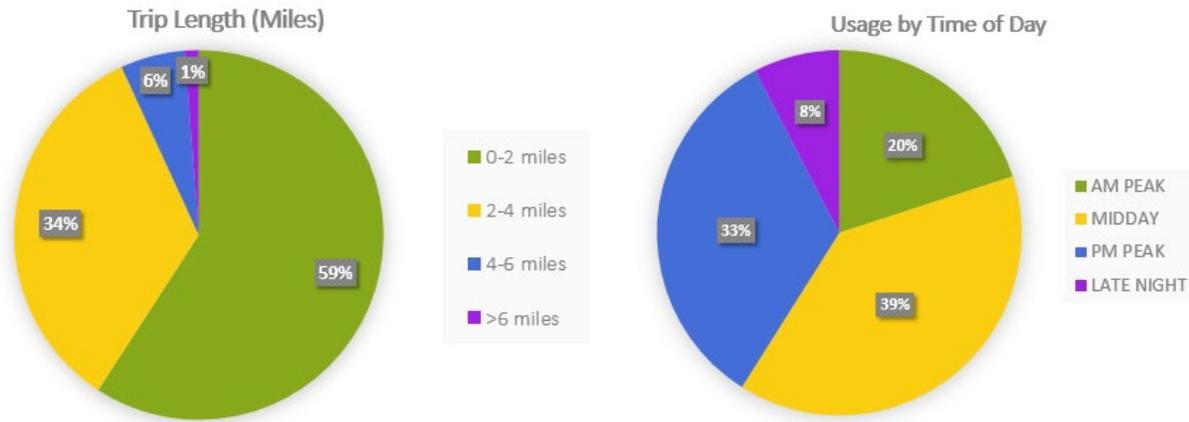
### PROGRAM USAGE

The GoMonrovia program began in March 2018 with a series of events and marketing efforts to inform the public of the program offerings. In the first two weeks, the Lyft portion of the program handled 4,291 rides – suggesting an annual ridership of 50,000 ride per year, slightly higher than the initial ridership estimates. But that turned out to be just the beginning. In just six months, the monthly ridership increased from 4,290 rides/month to over 67,000 rides/month:

### GOMONROVIA LYFT USAGE SINCE LAUNCH



The usage patterns of Lyft are summarized below. Midday and evening rides are most popular and most of the trips cover short distances, with 30% covering 5 miles or less and 83% at 10 miles or less. Approximately 20% of the trips appear to be commuter trips connecting Monrovia residents or Gold Line patrons to Monrovia jobs.



Over 20,000 people have signed up to use Lyft through the GoMonrovia program – far in excess of the 100 or so people who regularly used the dial-a-ride service. In fact, the GoMonrovia program is Lyft’s most heavily utilized transportation partnership program in the nation!

**BUDGET ADJUSTMENT**

With a projection of 39,000 riders per year growing to an annual usage of over 780,000 rides per year, clearly the program is a huge success – from a transportation service standpoint. From a budget standpoint, however, the tremendous growth in ridership has presented some financing challenges.

The initial program cost \$0.50 for a Classic Ride anywhere in the service area. This is the private ride option for up to 4 people with no additional stops. In September 2018, the City introduced the shared ride, or carpool, option. The \$0.50 per ride shifted to Shared Rides and the Classic Ride fare was increased to \$3.00 per ride to help incentivize shared rides and reduce vehicle miles travelled.

Due to increased ridership and budgetary constraints, in February 2019, the cost per ride was increased to \$0.50 per Shared Ride for trips to / from Old Town and the Gold Line station, \$1.00 per Shared Ride to other destinations within the service area, and \$3.50 per Classic Lyft ride. The price increase in February had little effect on monthly ridership, which has stabilized around 65-70,000 rides per month. On the plus side, the fare increases have continued to lower the City’s subsidy from \$6.00 to approximately \$3.85 per ride.

Additional budget adjustments may be considered by the Council to take effect in June 2019 with the following rate schedule under consideration:

\$0.50 per ride	Old Town and Gold Line station
\$2.00-3.00 per ride	Shared ride anywhere in the service area
\$4.50-5.50 per ride	Classic Lyft ride

City staff is continuously monitoring the ridership levels so that the appropriate adjustments can be made to the fare structure to allow the City's subsidy fund to go as far as possible with the goal of levelling off the City subsidy near \$2.00 per ride or an annual budget of approximately \$1.2 million

### **PROGRAM LESSONS LEARNED**

The Lime program showed that the concept of a dockless bike rental system is indeed workable and very flexible for system users in a suburban environment. At the beginning of the program, the LimeBike system was a cost-effective method to add a visible bike-share program into the community.

The on-ground Lime team redistributed and maintained the bike fleet at no cost to the City. This program element shifted bikes to the areas where usage was highest and kept resident complaints about bike dispersal to a minimum.

The City was disappointed when Lime announced that it was closing its dockless bike rental program in favor of scooter and electric bike rentals. The City is now investigating its options for a different bike rental program or a scooter or electric bike program.

The phenomenal growth in the Lyft program ridership and efficiency gains is a clear indication that the GoMonrovia program is a success.

Some lessons that other cities may learn from the GoMonrovia program are:

- A convenient, simple rideshare program can be used in a suburban setting to provide an alternative to the single-occupant automobile trips.
- Focused rideshare trips to a downtown area (Old Town Monrovia) and to a nearby rail station (Gold Line station) offer increased choices for residents and employees and encourage transit use.
- Increased rideshare trips can decrease parking demand at rail stations and in downtown areas, thus reducing pressure on the City to add expensive public parking structures to these areas.
- A City can creatively redeploy transportation funds to serve more residents/employees more effectively.
- A focused marketing campaign can inform and encourage the use of rideshare trips for first mile / last mile trips.
- More Monrovia residents feel conveniently connected to Old Town with an inexpensive trip that avoids the hassle of finding downtown parking.

- A citywide program can be developed to serve all residents and a convenient premium service can still be provided to residents with ADA needs.
- Keeping the design of a rideshare program as simple to understand as possible is crucial for behavioral change and program adoption.
- An early investment in marketing and outreach are key; even the most well-designed programs won't get used if people don't know about it!

Monrovia has learned a lot from the initial deployment and operation of the GoMonrovia program, and we believe that it has applications to other suburban cities. We would be happy to discuss our program elements with other cities interested in implementing creative transportation solutions.