City of WHITEWATER
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Office of Finance
312 W. Whitewater St.
Whitewater, WI 53190

Date: May 9, 2025

To: Finance Committee

         John Weidl, City Manager

From: Rachelle Blitch, Director of Financial and Administrative Services

Re: Future of Shared-Ride Program

It is essential to establish both short-term and long-term solutions that effectively address the city's transportation needs. In the short term, our primary options are to continue contracting with Brown Cab or to bring the service in-house. At this time, I do not recommend bringing the service in-house, as it presents challenges in securing personnel with the specialized expertise required to manage the program. Additionally, this approach could result in higher operational costs for the city.

However, there are measures we can take to enhance rider safety. For instance, we could require the installation and use of cameras in all vehicles transporting community members. This requirement could be proposed to Brown Cab as a condition for continuing service in the area, along with any other safety enhancements deemed appropriate by the committee to address ongoing community concerns.

To develop a sustainable long-term strategy, I recommend gathering input directly from the community. This feedback will help identify unmet needs and guide future planning. One potential opportunity is to explore a partnership with the county when their transportation contract is up for renewal. Once we have a clearer understanding of community needs, we can collaborate on tailored solutions and identify potential partnerships.

It would also be beneficial to evaluate whether the current service hours adequately meet community needs. If demand does not justify the cost of extended hours, we may be able to reduce expenses and optimize resource allocation by adjusting the schedule or reallocating service hours to periods of higher demand.

Attached is a sample survey designed to assist in the information-gathering process. Preliminary observations suggest that transportation to healthcare appointments is a significant concern, due to the limited availability of medical facilities within the city. Once community needs are clearly identified, we can evaluate whether current programs are sufficient or if new partnerships are required to address gaps and avoid duplication of services.

Please note that this sample survey is not intended to be comprehensive. Rather, it serves as a foundational guide for developing a more detailed and inclusive survey that will more accurately reflect the full scope of the community's transportation needs.

I have also included transportation plans from a few other communities for reference. For example, the City of Platteville partners with the local university to provide scheduled route service that is available to all community members, in addition to offering an on-demand shared ride program. Walworth County

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similarly highlights a variety of transportation programs available to residents, illustrating a broader range of service models that may be informative for our planning efforts. Additionally, we may consider engaging larger employers within the city who could benefit from improved employee transportation and may be open to sharing associated costs.

Addressing the city's transportation needs requires a balanced approach that considers both immediate solutions and long-term planning. By continuing service through existing providers while exploring targeted safety improvements, we can maintain essential services in the short term. Simultaneously, engaging the community through a thoughtfully developed survey will allow us to identify unmet needs and opportunities for collaboration. Through strategic partnerships and efficient resource allocation, we can work toward a more sustainable and responsive transportation system that serves all members of the community effectively.