MICHIGAN RIDE PARATRANSIT PARTNER UPDATE

6.8.2021

AGENDA

- Background

- Purpose and Performance Metrics

- Lessons Learned Thus Far

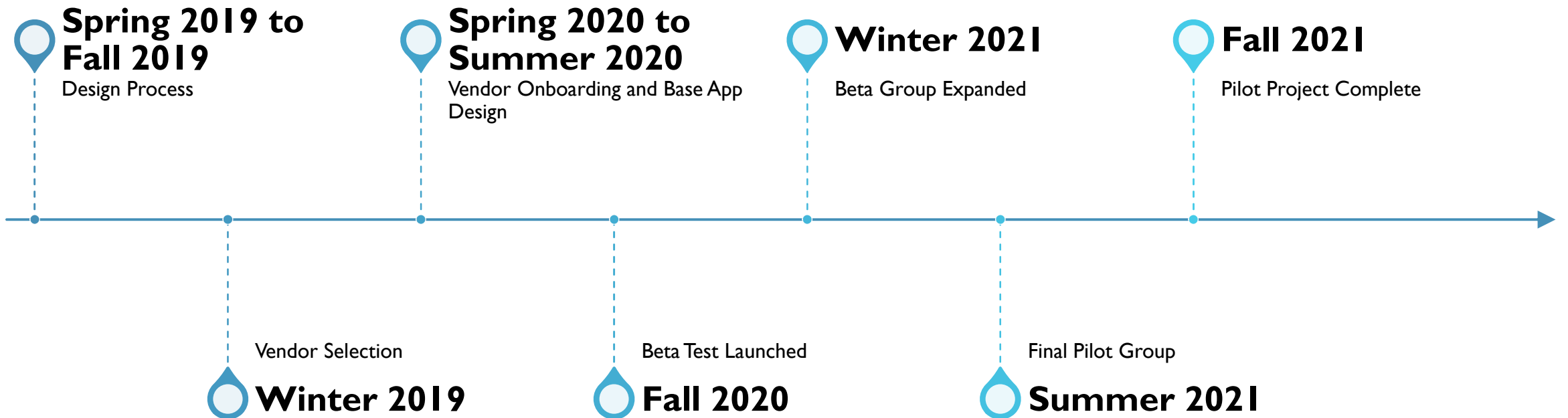- Impacts & Insight for the Future

- Next Steps

- Adjourn

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BACKGROUND

In early 2019, **MDOT awarded a $1 million Michigan Mobility Challenge grant to a partnership of AAATA, DDOT, RTA and SMART** to pilot an innovative technology solution that would allow users to manage and book ADA paratransit rides more accurately and expediently.

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TIMELINE

Spring 2019 to Fall 2019
Design Process

Spring 2020 to Summer 2020
Vendor Onboarding and Base App Design

Winter 2021
Beta Group Expanded

Fall 2021
Pilot Project Complete

Vendor Selection
Winter 2019

Beta Test Launched
Fall 2020

Final Pilot Group
Summer 2021

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HIGH-TECH ANTHROPOLOGY® FRAMEWORK

What problem are we trying to solve?

What is the best solution to the problem?

Observations & Interviews:
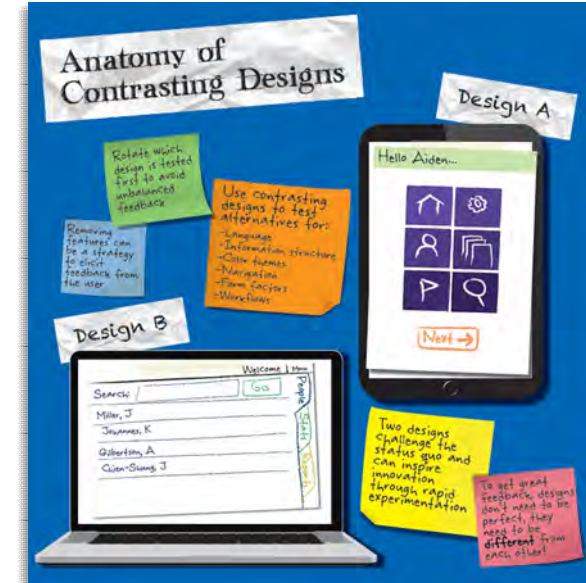Studying users in their native environment in order to get first-hand accounts of users' experiences and problems.
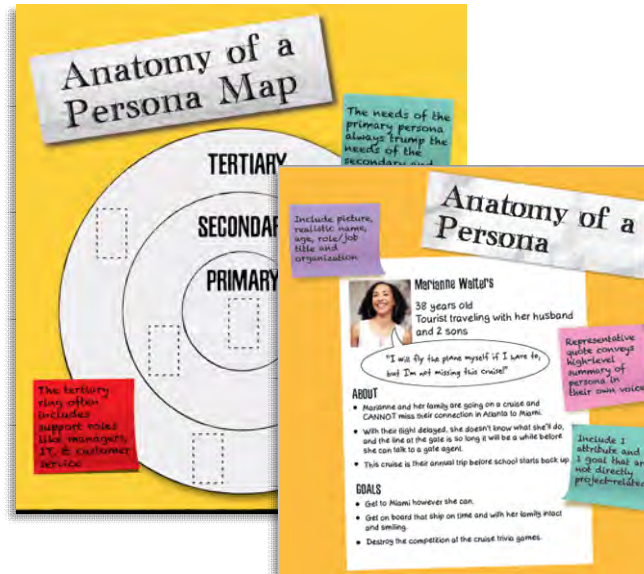
Personas & Persona Mapping:
Creating personas based on end-user characteristics and having the business prioritize in order to focus and scope the design effort.

Rapid Prototyping & Design Assessments:
Creating multiple design ideas and assessing with end-users in order to validate design prior to investing in development.

Discovery and Key Findings

Discovery Methodology

- Observations and interviews with
  - Project Stakeholders
  - Riders
  - Caretakers
  - Dispatchers, Schedulers, Information specialists, etc.
  - LAC & SAC meetings

- Ride-alongs with drivers and riders

Key Findings

- Riders
  - Experienced long wait times
  - Had to schedule rides during business hours
  - Missed boarding windows

- Dispatchers and Schedulers
  - Experienced scheduling limitations in software
  - Limited rider capacity
  - Lacked trust in automated route creation system

- IT Systems
  - Different software systems between the services that do not easily integrate with other software

PERSONA

I was chosen because:

- I am an independent rider, who travels often and for a variety of reasons
- As a blind person, if I can use the application, It will likely be accessible to others

Carol Weather
60 years old
Paratransit rider on & off for 8 yrs.

"I'm at y'all's mercy out here

About

- Carol became blind after her heart condition worsened 6 years ago. Sudder cold air can stop her heart and she has be very careful getting to & from her shift at Motor City Casino in the winter
- She relies on her sister to take her to church and to drive her whenever Metr Lift can't take her
- She gets frustrated when no one at wor tells her that the van has arrived

Goals

- Retire in the next five years
- Get home with enough time to fix dinne
- Surprise her sister with a birthday present

Based on initial observations, interviews, and discussions with the project stakeholders, we hypothesized that Carol needed a solution that empowered her to solve her scheduling needs without getting on the phone. We believed this would reduce current pain around:

- Long waiting times
- High volume of support calls
- Last minute cancellations
- Needing extensive knowledge about how the transit system works

HYPOTHESIS

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PROJECT GOALS

Project Primary Goals

- Enhance Passenger Experience in Requesting Rides
- Reduce Call Handling Time
- Improve Ride Coordination for Cross Agency Trips for both Dispatch & Passenger
- Enhanced Reminders for Passengers Reduces No-Shows & Confusion on Pick-up Times

Project Secondary Goals

- Transit Contractor/Staff Accountability to Rider Requests
- Enhance Efficiency of Call Takers – Able to Work App Requested Rides During Lower Call Volume Times
- More Efficient Cancellation for Passengers & Dipatchers

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COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE SERVICES

- Each service has their own set of rules when it comes to requesting, scheduling, and canceling rides

  - For one application to serve all paratransit riders, the services needed to agree on a common set of rules for the application

  - Conflicting rules were identified and through discussion, the services agreed to a common set that would be expected from the application

- When a rider indicated there was difficulty with requesting cross-agency trips, SMART and DDOT (Transdev) collaborated with the vendors to implement a refined protocol for processing those requests

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CONTINUED REFINEMENT OF SOFTWARE

- Menlo HTAs continued observation and interviews throughout the pilot phases to gather data around how the application is working for riders and schedulers

- Feonix provided onboarding support for riders and gathered feedback around user pain points

- RTA, Feonix, Kyyti, and Menlo worked together to prioritize development work based on user reported data

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App & Dispatch Platform Interface

PERFORMANCE METRICS

Call Center/Customer Support

- Call Handling Time/Agent
- Ride Booking Time
- Complaints Reported

Users

- Number of Passengers Booking Rides via App
- Rides Per Month Booked via App
- Multi-Agency Rides Booked via App
- App Utilization per Rider

PILOT: BY THE NUMBERS

- Number of SMART Passengers: 19
- Number of SMART Trips: 767

- Number of DDOT Passengers: 6
- Number of DDOT Trips: 442

- Number of SMART/DDOT Passengers Eligible for Both Services: 9
- Number of Cross Agency Trips: 22

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RIDER IMPACT – LIFE CHANGING

Angelo uses the app to book rides in seconds even with the voice accessibility option, and it has allowed him to "gain months of his life back". The app has enabled him to experience even more services and opportunities despite the pandemic.

Dovenetta – Uses the app to schedule weekly physical therapy trips – went from 3-5 hours a week on the phone to schedule 6 trips to 15 minutes to confirm details with dispatch.

Brandii & Katherine – Brandii uses the app to schedule her daily rides to work, and her mom, Katherine is able to oversee the rides are scheduled and confirmed. Brandii is gaining independence and Katherine is elated to regain hours of her life back from waiting on hold hours every week and see her daughter claim this freedom.

Elveretta & Nioka – Nioka uses the app as a caregiver for Elveretta to book rides for her Aunt to get to rides to work and to the doctor. Nioka is a fulltime nurse and using this app during the pandemic has been a life saver – with her busy schedule it would have been impossible to maintain her Aunt's care without this technology.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Riders are Excited & Love the App – Including Riders with Screen Readers

- Training and Technology Support for First Time Users and Ongoing Support is Critical

- Call Center Staff Enjoy the Ability to Quickly Process Rides without Passenger on the Phone
  - Sometimes Meeting Dates/Times Requested by Passenger Can be Tricky
  - An API Integration Will Be Key for the Future

- Transfer Trips – Still Work in Progress – COVID Limited Test Cases

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PILOT NEXT STEPS

- Move from Beta to Early Adopter Utilization Critical Part of Growth
  - Recommend to target 50 users per provider; general outreach to full customer base, targeted outreach to LAC and advocacy/stakeholder groups (e.g. AAA1-B, DAAA, Warriors on Wheels, Detroit Disability Power, etc.)

- Run Pilot through September 2021, potentially extend

- Develop a Final Report that Highlights Lessons Learned, and Recommended Next Steps

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Printed Graphical Pieces for Michigan Ride Paratransit App Outreach & Passenger Education

Also available in Spanish, Arabic, & Braille.

IMPACTS & INSIGHT FOR THE FUTURE

- Integration of app with new and existing scheduling software

- App ownership (Who is responsible for the care and feeding of the technology?)

- Customer training (Who is responsible for handling customer issues with the app?)

- App expansion to other agencies (5310 agencies?)

- What will this cost in the short and long term?

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