Joint Rural-Urban Transit Systems

The Case of the Urban Donut
Tennessee Quick Facts

- 9 Regionalized Rural Public Transit agencies
  - 3 hybrid 5311/5307 funded agencies
- 2 Tourist Intensive 5311 agencies
- 12 Urbanized Areas
  - 8 Small Urban
  - 4 Large Urbans
Census 2010 v 2000

• Census 2010 re-drew the Urbanized Area (UZA) boundaries set by the 2000 Census

• Total Population in 12 Tennessee UZAs = 3,450,715

• 38% of Census 2010 UZA Population is not served by the Fixed Route Systems in the Urban areas

• Case Study: Johnson City, TN
  – UZA Population: 120,415
  – Population not served by Fixed Route system: 57,263 (52%)
The Urban Donut
Impact of the Urban Donut

- **5311-funded service no longer eligible in new UZA boundaries**
  - All trips must have one leg in the Rural area
  - Compliance Findings, Trip Software overlays

- **Funding limitations**
  - 5311 Rural agencies deplete match reserves to continue service

- **Environmental Justice concerns**
  - Low-income individuals most impacted by UZA shift
TDOT Interim Solution

• Critical Trips Program: a state-funded program for operating expenses within the Urban Donut

• Critical Trips program provides 50% state match on operating in the UZA
  – Local 50% match derived from local funds & program income

• $2 million annual budget

• Intended to be formula-based, too many obstacles for Rurals
Program Outcomes

• Unsustainable growth in service vs available funds

• New Requirements for Rurals
  – Transportation Programmatic Cost Allocation Plans
  – Full NTD Reporter status
  – Rurals become hybrid recipients of 5311/5307

• Adds more players to the 5307 distribution
  – Demand Response operators with 100+ VOMS have to get on Table 3A to use 5307 for operating

• NTD is a major obstacle for Rurals seeking to serve Urban Donut
Possible Federal Solutions?

• Allow 5311-funded service in the newly-urbanized area
  – Coordinated Plans
  – Certification by MPO and/or Urban that areas are unserved by Fixed Route & Paratransit

• Dedicated Federal operating funds for the Urban Donut
  – Funded based on population of the UZA unserved by Fixed Route

• Research into how UZA boundaries impact transit on the ground
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