February 7, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

In 2017, the Georgia Department of Transportation funded a study entitled “A Statewide Assessment of Public Transit Funding Needs for Counties Trending Urban in Georgia.” The original objective of this study was to forecast future transit funding for the state of Georgia after the 2020 decennial census. However, as we embarked on this study, it became clear that the trends we were seeing in Georgia applied across the nation, and that a national-level assessment would be needed to fully understand how spatial and temporal changes of the population changes from the 2010 and 2020 decennial censuses would impact funding for the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) § 5311 rural and FTA § 5307 urban transit programs. Consequently, this draft final report forecasts funding requirements for the FTA § 5311 and FTA § 5307 programs after the 2020 decennial census for each state in the U.S. and identifies rural areas in each state that could become enveloped into large areas after the 2020 decennial census. The latter is important because rural transit agencies that shift to large urban areas after the 2020 decennial census will lose their ability to use federal funding for operating expenses for two years due to the “100 bus rule.”

The ultimate goals of this research are to: (1) help rural transit agencies, state departments of transportation, and metropolitan planning organizations prepare for potential funding changes after the 2020 decennial census; and (2) promote regulatory reform that more fully considers the “trending urban” issue when considering federal funding for transit operating expenses. To help facilitate these goals, this report includes a set of appendices that any government agency can use to understand what the potential changes in FTA funding after the 2020 decennial census mean to their constituents. These appendices include the predicted changes in FTA § 5311 and FTA § 5307 funding, as well as the list of urban clusters that are predicted to grow into small urban areas and/or be absorbed into large urban areas.

GDOT has given us permission to release a draft of the final report for review and comment. The report is available online at http://garrowlab.ce.gatech.edu/. If you have feedback on the report, feel free to contact me at laurie.garrow@ce.gatech.edu. I look forward to hearing your feedback and engaging in dialog as to how we can best advocate for funding for our transit systems across the nation.

Sincerely,

Laurie A. Garrow
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