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Transit

A METHOD FOR ESTIMATING STATEWIDE RURAL AND SMALL URBAN TRANSIT NEEDS AND INVESTMENT PRIORITIES

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This study demonstrates a method for identifying statewide transit needs and gaps, prioritizing investment needs for statewide transit planning, collecting better data for demand-response transit level of service, estimating costs of needed improvements, and projecting future service needs based on projected population growth. The method was applied to the state of North Dakota and is transferable to any state, especially those with a large number of rural demand-response transit agencies that are not located within metropolitan planning areas.

Currently, data in the National Transit Database is insufficient for analyzing level of service for rural transit agencies, as it lacks information on geographic service area and span of service. A survey conducted for this study filled this data need by collecting detailed data regarding each agency's service area and the number of days and hours of service being provided. These data, when combined with population and demographic data are useful for identifying gaps in transit service and prioritizing needed service improvements.

The study also calculated per capita trips, per capita vehicle miles, and per capita vehicle hours provided in regions across the state. These performance measures were compared to benchmark values to identify areas where the transit system may not be meeting the needs of the service area population, understanding that needs are not identical in all areas. The study estimated necessary increases in service and funding to meet target levels in different scenarios. Population projections were also considered for estimating needed increases in service and funding.