Appalachian Regional Commission
Request for Proposals (RFP)

Public Transportation in Appalachia – Inventory and Assessment

Proposals are due by close of business on
July 12, 2019

Appalachian Regional Commission
1666 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20009-1068

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Appalachian Regional Commission Request for Proposals:

Public Transportation in Appalachia – Inventory and Assessment

I.   Overview of Request for Proposals (RFP)

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) invites proposals from qualified researchers and consultants to conduct research and provide guidance regarding public transportation (also referred to as "public transit" or "transit" in this document) in the Appalachian Region, with a particular focus on rural public transportation issues. The main purposes of this study are to:

- Inventory and document public transportation coverage and availability for the thirteen states that make up the Appalachian Region (both ARC counties and non-ARC counties; both urban and rural),

- Assess the status and adequacy of rural[1] public transportation efforts by each Appalachian state; and,

- Highlight challenges and best practices and develop simplified guidance for non-transportation practitioners regarding public transportation policies and funding programs.

ARC's vision is that Appalachia is a region of great opportunity that will achieve socioeconomic parity with the nation. Transportation's role in this vision is largely related to providing access – those with great access to opportunities and services are much more likely to be successful and have a high quality of life than those with poor access. Public transit is an important lifeline for individuals with no car, or an unreliable car, especially in non-urban areas where biking or walking are unrealistic. This project will help ARC better understand the extent to which existing transit services are adequately creating or enhancing access for disadvantaged populations, particularly those in rural areas. It will also help us better connect transportation, economic development, education, and health practitioners throughout the region to each other, as well as to best practices and guidance.

II. Background

The primary goal of the Appalachian Development Highway System (ADHS) when established by Congress in 1965 was to remove isolation and better connect the Appalachian Region to markets. Although the ADHS is now over 85% complete, many parts of Appalachia, which is largely rural, still suffer from isolation and poor access, inhibiting economic opportunity and growth. While completing the remainder of the ADHS is critical to continue improving access in

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[1] For purposes of this study, rural areas are defined as areas with less than 50,000 population.

the region, other transportation solutions can have an equal or greater impact on access while also complementing and enhancing the value of the ADHS.

In this context, "access" generally means the ability of residents and businesses to reach desired opportunities and services. In some areas, ADHS routes or other planned four-lane highways remain unbuilt, leaving travel time and reliability challenges for residents and businesses. In other areas, reliable highways are abundant, but many households lack a personal automobile, or must share one among multiple users, and alternative options such as transit, walking, biking or ride sharing are unavailable, unrealistic, or unsafe. Many areas suffer from both insufficient roadway connectivity and limited mobility solutions for those without a car.

Low income households are less likely to own a vehicle, more likely to have less than one vehicle available per adult in the household, and more likely to own older, less reliable vehicles. This suggests that transportation policy and investments should account for vehicle availability trends by expanding and improving public transit options, particularly in areas where alternative modes like walking and biking are less feasible. However, while many transportation practitioners and agencies acknowledge this trend and the need for better transit, there are many barriers preventing adequate implementation. Transit in more rural areas is especially challenging to implement as people and destinations are more spread out with less density to generate ridership. Although low income individuals are in most need of assistance to achieve financial progress, they continue to be least served by transportation infrastructure and tend to have the poorest access to opportunities and services, particularly in rural areas.

Each state in Appalachia has unique challenges with implementing a robust public transportation program. This project is intended to gather comprehensive data on transit coverage, availability, and effectiveness throughout the Region. ARC hopes to use the information gained from this research to better understand access challenges faced by residents of Appalachia, and eventually shape policies and programs to better address access issues in the Region.

About Appalachia

The Appalachian Region, as defined in ARC's authorizing legislation, is a 205,000-square-mile Region that follows the spine of the Appalachian Mountains from southern New York to northern Mississippi. It includes all of West Virginia and parts of 12 other states: Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. Approximately 42% percent of the Region's population is rural, compared with 20 percent of the national population.

The Region's economy, once highly dependent on mining, forestry, agriculture, chemical industries, and heavy industry, has become more diversified in recent times, and now includes manufacturing and service industries. In 1960, about 31 percent of Appalachians lived in poverty; over the 2011−2015 period, 17.1 percent lived in poverty. The number of high-poverty counties in Appalachia (counties with poverty rates at least 1.5 times the U.S. average) declined from 295 in 1960 to 87 in the 2011-2015 period.

These gains have transformed the Region from one of widespread poverty to one of economic contrasts: some communities have successfully diversified their economies, while others still require basic infrastructure such as roads and water and sewer systems. The contrasts are not surprising in light of the Region's size and diversity—the Region includes 420 counties in 13 states, extends more than 1,000 miles, from southern New York to northeastern Mississippi, and is home to more than 25 million people.

About the Appalachian Regional Commission

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) is an economic development agency of the federal government and 13 state governments focusing on 420 counties across the Appalachian Region. Established by an act of Congress in 1965, ARC is composed of the governors of the 13 Appalachian states, as well as a federal co-chair appointed by the president. Local participation is provided through multi-county local development districts.

ARC's mission is to innovate, partner, and invest to build community capacity and strengthen economic growth in Appalachia to help the Region achieve socioeconomic parity with the nation. ARC funds projects that address the five goals identified in the Commission's strategic plan:

1. Invest in entrepreneurial and business development strategies that strengthen Appalachia's economy.
2. Increase the education, knowledge, skills, and health of residents to work and succeed in Appalachia.
3. Invest in critical infrastructure—especially broadband; transportation, including the Appalachian Development Highway System; and water/wastewater systems.
4. Strengthen Appalachia's community and economic development potential by leveraging the Region's natural and cultural heritage assets.
5. Build the capacity and skills of current and next-generation leaders and organizations to innovate, collaborate, and advance community and economic development.

Each year, ARC provides funding for several hundred projects in the Appalachian Region in areas such as business development, education and job training, telecommunications, infrastructure, community development, housing, and transportation. These projects create thousands of new jobs; improve local water and wastewater systems; increase school readiness; expand access to health care; assist local communities with strategic planning; and provide technical and managerial assistance to emerging businesses.

Additional information about Appalachia and the Appalachian Regional Commission can be found at www.arc.gov.

About the Appalachian Development Highway System (ADHS)

Congress established the Appalachian Regional Commission in 1965 to foster economic and social development of the Appalachian Region. In order to promote economic development in Appalachia, Congress authorized ARC to carry out a number of programs, including the Appalachian Development Highway System (ADHS).

From its inception, the ADHS was designed to be an instrument of economic development, linking to national and international markets, improving regional traffic efficiency by connecting to the interstate system, facilitating access to jobs and public services, and opening up remote areas within Appalachia for development and job creation. ADHS corridors were designed to close gaps between markets within the Region, as well as to provide access to markets outside of the Region, and to connect to the Interstate Highway System. Supporting transportation systems, such as transit, complement and enhance the value of the ADHS by improving access to opportunities and services for residents and businesses.

For more information on the ADHS and links to ADHS reports, see http://www.arc.gov/adhs.

IV. Scope of Work

Proposals must present an outline and description of the research and analysis to be conducted, a work plan, and a schedule for reports and deliverables. The scope of work will require a team of researchers and consultants with a broad set of skills to execute the project. The successful applicant will develop a clear and logical methodology to analyze the topics and key objectives specified in the scope of work. The methodology should include:

- Specification of data sets and methods to be used for each of the proposed analyses and deliverables, including development of data collection methods and sources of information.
- Discussion of the scope, advantages, and limitations of data resources and methods for the purposes of this analysis, including issues related to local, regional, and national data coverage.
- Specification of the analytical framework, research methods, and statistical/forecasting techniques to be used for the proposed analysis and development of guidance materials.
- Specification of any proposed stakeholder outreach or other external feedback and input that would directly inform the analysis and development of guidance materials.
- Proposed approach to present findings and recommendations.

The following tasks and key work items should be addressed in the design of proposals for this project. Proposals may offer additional research and policy items to be considered above and beyond the scope described in this RFP that would be advantageous to ARC and its stakeholders.

1. *Transit Services Inventory and Assessment*

   a) Develop a comprehensive inventory of transit service providers, coverage areas, and service availability in Appalachian states, including sub-inventories at the state, county, and municipality level. Inventory should capture all services within the thirteen Appalachian states, including services outside of ARC counties. Inventory should include all geography of services, including urban, small urban, and rural. For each identified provider, inventory should include, at a minimum, the following information:
      - Type of community served (e.g., rural, small-urban, urban)
      - Type of transit service provided (e.g., fixed route, on-demand, non-emergency medical, etc.)
      - Type of transit operation entity (e.g., local government, private/non-profit, etc.)
      - Main funding source(s) utilized (e.g., FTA 5311)
      - Timetable overviews, if available
      - Coverage maps
      - Use of GTFS data
      - Use of technology enabled services (e.g., apps for tracking, navigation, payment, etc.); and,
      - Types of ridership, trip purpose and other data being collected and utilized.

   b) Create a shape file enabling all inventoried data to be mapped and develop a map displaying public transportation coverage areas and service availability for the thirteen Appalachian states based on the inventory.

   c) Assess the status of each state's rural transit program, transit funding usage, transit coverage, and unmet needs. **Only transit services in <u>rural </u>areas (less than 50,000 population) should be included in this assessment/subtask.**
      - What structure is in place to plan and implement rural transit services?
      - How does the state solicit applications and award funding for rural transit services?
      - Who is responsible for rural planning and how well are those efforts supported by the State DOT and other transportation partners?
      - How is federal and state transit funding utilized for rural transit? Is all available funding fully utilized?
      - What other non-state/federal sources of funding are heavily used for rural transit and which may influence rural transit planning efforts?
      - What are the main uses of current rural transit services (e.g., medical, employment, etc.), estimated by number of riders and miles traveled for each use, and what access demands are transit services not currently meeting?
      - How effective are the state's rural transit efforts in providing access to desired destinations for those who have limited vehicle availability or other

impediments to using a personal vehicle?

d) Prepare interim project report with summary of inventory, assessment of rural transit service and state practices to address rural transit needs. For inventory, summarize in a series of maps, charts, figures, tables with explanations. Provide overall inventory data in well-organized spreadsheet or database format. **Inventory portion of this task includes both urban and rural transit providers, while assessment portion of this task is specific to rural (<50,000 population) transit services.**

2. *Highlight Challenges and Best Practices, with Focus on Rural*

o Based on findings from task 1, *Transit Services Inventory and Assessment*, and follow up discussions with transit providers, and regional, state, and local officials, determine key challenges and best practices related to **rural transit** (in areas with <50,000 population) in Appalachia. Challenges and best practices should be related to the ability of transit providers in the Appalachian Region to provide adequate access to individuals in rural areas who have limited vehicle availability or other impediments to using a personal vehicle for travel to desired destinations.

o Prepare interim report with overview of challenges and best practices. One possible approach to this report is to highlight key challenges, then highlight examples of best practices which have successfully addressed those key challenges.

3. *Inform*

o Develop one-page fact sheet for states and communities in Appalachia summarizing transit funding opportunities along with other key facts and suggestions about providing transit services in Appalachia, particularly in rural areas. Scope of one-page fact sheet and outline of content will be developed collaboratively with ARC.

o Develop a similar one-page fact sheet for ARC partners in Appalachia summarizing transit funding opportunities along with other key facts and suggestions, particularly regarding rural areas. This fact sheet should be tailored to non-transportation practitioners so it may differ slightly from the fact sheet for states and communities. Scope of one-page fact sheet and outline of content will be developed collaboratively with ARC.

4. *Recommend Next Steps*

o Based on findings from other tasks, recommend future research regarding rural transit in Appalachia and recommend policies or other activities for ARC to focus on in order to improve rural transit in Appalachia.

5. *Present Findings*

- o Prepare one culminating report, with executive summary, which encompasses deliverables from all tasks.
- o Meet with ARC leadership and staff to present findings.
- o Host one or more public webinars and/or present at conferences with ARC staff to share findings from this project to states, communities, and ARC partners.

V. Deliverables

The contract will require a number of written deliverables, as described in the scope of work, including interim reports, one-page fact sheets, draft final report, and final report. Contractor is expected to provide regularly updates to ARC on progress toward completing scope of work and inform ARC of any delays or challenges in meeting the agreed upon scope of work or schedule. Summary reports generally detailing progress toward completing the agreed upon scope of work should accompany any requests for payment.

The final report must include an executive summary that integrates, summarizes, and interprets key findings of the study. The final report, as well as the executive summary, must be written for a non- technical audience and must include descriptive statistics, analyses, graphs, maps, and tables where appropriate. Technical details, data tables, and details regarding methodology must be presented in appendices.

Contractor must submit one printed copy of the report and two electronic versions: a Microsoft Word file and an Adobe PDF file. Contractor must submit all data collected, analyses performed, and data presentation tools created as part of the study. Contractor may submit relevant data collected as part of the study in a Microsoft Excel workbook or a Microsoft Access database. Contractor will provide metadata (field name description, definition, source, sourced date, and equation if computed) for all raw and computed data fields. If geographic information system maps are developed for the project, contractor must provide map databases, map images, and map documents. ARC will provide contractor with formatting guidance documents for all reports.

VI. Technical, Management, and Cost Proposals

A. Technical Proposal (This narrative should be 15 pages or fewer.)

1. *Summary Abstract* **(300 words)**
   Provide a brief abstract of the technical portion of the proposal by summarizing the background, objectives, proposed methodology, and expected outputs and results of the research.

2. *Methodology*
   Describe the step-by-step approach or methods intended to accomplish all tasks specified in

this RFP. This section should provide a detailed explanation of the data and methodologies to be used, describe the limits of the selected methods, and justify the selection of these methods over others. The narrative must identify the tasks in this research project that will require participation by ARC staff. Finally, the narrative must identify any difficulties that may be encountered in this project and propose practical and sound solutions to these problems.

3. *Project Work Plan and Milestones*
   Describe the phases into which the proposed research can logically be divided and completed. Flow charts should be included as necessary. A schedule of milestones and deadlines must be specified for the completion of various work elements, including information collection, interviews, surveys, analyses, quarterly progress reports, preliminary drafts for review, and final draft reports.

B. Management Proposal

1. *Business Management Organization and Personnel*
   Furnish a brief narrative description of the organization, including the division or branch planned to perform the proposed effort, and the authority responsible for controlling these resources and personnel.

2. *Staffing Plan and Key Personnel*
   Provide a staffing plan that describes your proposed key personnel and staff distribution to accomplish this work. Describe key personnel performing the research and their role on the project (e.g., project manager, economist, transit analyst, transportation modeling). Brief resumes (two pages or less) of key personnel are required. The selected contractor will be required to furnish the services of those identified in the proposal as key personnel unless ARC authorizes a change in personnel. The staffing plan should present a chart that partitions the time commitment of each professional staff member to the project's tasks and schedule. In addition, the proposal should include a brief description of activities for key project-related personnel and anticipated deliverables. Finally, the proposal should identify the relationship of key project personnel to your organization, including consultants and subcontractors.

3. *Relevant Prior Experience*
   Describe the qualifications and experience of the organization, aligned with the personnel that will be assigned to the project. Please limit descriptions of relevant project experience to no more than ten (10) projects. Include direct experience with the specific subject-matter area and provide examples of final reports or deliverables (via web links and/or printed materials) of the three most-similar studies or transit plans your organization has produced. Provide associated organization names, addresses, names of contact persons, and telephone numbers for reference.

4. Contract Agreement Requirements
   List any special requirements you want included in the contract.

C. Cost Proposal

This section must include all cost information. Cost information must be itemized and must include direct labor costs (consistent with the staffing plan), labor overhead costs, transportation, the estimated cost of any subcontracts, other direct costs (such as those for databases), university overhead, total direct cost and overhead, and total cost and fee or profit. Please note that the university overhead rate charged to ARC should not exceed the rate charged to the university's home state.

In addition, ARC requires that the selected contractor travel to three meetings in Washington, D.C.—one meeting with ARC staff to kick off the project, one interim project update meeting, and at least one formal presentation and discussion of key findings with ARC officials at the conclusion of the project.

VII. Cost and Timing

ARC expects this project to be funded in the **$150,000 to $250,000** range.

The contract awarded for this research project will be a firm fixed-price contract with payments on a quarterly schedule, or other schedule negotiated between the selected contractor and ARC staff. The contract scope of work and budget shall remain firm during the project. The project should be completed within 12 months.

VIII. Evaluation of Proposals

All proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:
   • Complete, clearly articulated, and logical study design;
   • Technically competent methodology;
   • Qualifications, relevant prior experience, command of existing research on rural transit, and ability to present findings in a useful manner;
   • A credible management proposal for staffing, and the capability to carry out and support the project in a timely fashion;
   • The quality of interviews, focus groups, surveys, and/or case study protocols proposed; and
   • The cost-effectiveness of the proposal.

Short-listed contractors may be interviewed via teleconference, videoconference or in-person. It is anticipated that a contractor will be selected by September 1, 2019.

IX. Proposal Submission

Proposals are due by close of business on July 12, 2019.

An original and three hard copies of the proposal must be submitted to:
Ryan Brumfield
Regional Planning and Research Division
Appalachian Regional Commission
1666 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20009-1068

In addition to the hard-copy submission, *proposals must also be emailed on or before the deadline* to rbrumfield@arc.gov. Email attachments should be no more than 10 MB.

Questions about this proposal should be directed to Ryan Brumfield, at rbrumfield@arc.gov or 202-884-7706.