UTC RESEARCH PROJECT DESCRIPTION

PROJECT NUMBER:
03103

PROJECT TITLE:
Rural Transportation Needs Assessment: St. Clair County

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS:
Jay K. Lindly
Civil & Environmental Engineering
University of Alabama
Box 870205
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0205
(205) 348-1724
jlindly@coe.eng.ua.edu

PROJECT OBJECTIVE:
The objective of this project is to assess the additional resources required to provide rural transit service in St. Clair County, Alabama and to evaluate a transit connection to the Birmingham urban area. The project will identify funds necessary to initiate a county-wide system, and the methodology will serve as an analytical tool when other counties apply for rural transit funding in future.

PROJECT ABSTRACT:
Alabama is one of the few states that do not provide state funds to rural transit facilities. As a result, only 50 of 67 counties in Alabama have those systems. Rural citizens in unserved counties face limited transportation access to medical and dental care, senior citizen centers, and other extracurricular activities. The proposed project will assess the resources required to establish a transit service in St. Clair County, including existing capital resources and the availability of federal, state, and local resources. It will determine if and how significant links from St. Clair County to existing transit systems in the Birmingham urban area can be achieved.

PROJECT TASK DESCRIPTIONS:
Task 1 - Coordinate Kickoff Meeting
Task 2 - Acquire and Review Data
Task 3 - Meet with Citizens and Officials
Task 4 - Determine Community’s Vision of the System
Task 5 - Formulate System’s Operating Characteristics
Task 6 - Obtain Feedback from Citizens and Officials
Task 7 - Revise Operating Characteristics
Task 8 - Coordinate with Stakeholder Agencies
Task 9 - Prepare Final Report
MILESTONES AND DATES:
- Task 1, Jan 1 – Jan 21, 2003
- Task 2, Jan 1 – Feb 30
- Task 3, Feb 30 – Mar 30
- Task 4, Feb 30 – Apr 30
- Task 5, Mar 30 – May 31
- Task 6, Jun 1 – Jun 31
- Task 7, Jul 1 – Aug 15
- Task 8, Aug 15 – Oct 1
- Task 9, Oct 1 – Dec 31, 2003

TOTAL BUDGET:
Twelve month project; UTCA funds $30,206; Birmingham Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham $24,999; total budget $55,205.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT:
Student involvement in this project will be greatly reduced in order to provide funding for a Research Associate.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER RESEARCH PROJECTS:
This project is a natural extension of the activities conducted in UTCA project 99104 - “An Analysis and Recommendations for Rural Public Transportation Systems in Alabama”, 01110 - “Alabama Transit – Intercity Bus Service Study”, and 00469 - “Public Transportation Needs Assessment for Alabama.” Those three projects were involved with statewide issues of transit availability and transit funding. The proposed project will investigate the issues of starting a new transit system in a single county.

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER ACTIVITIES:
The results of this research are expected to be disseminated to parties within Alabama through presentations at an Alabama Rural Transportation Assistance Program meeting and at a meeting of the Alabama Association of Regional Councils. In addition, a paper will be submitted for publication by the Journal of Public Transportation.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT:
The project will be useful at the state and local level. Locally, it will identify funds necessary to initiate a rural “Section 5311” transit system in Saint Clair County and set up the personnel structure and operating characteristics for the system. Statewide, it provides a blueprint for use by the 17 counties not served in Alabama for funding and establishing such systems.

TRB KEYWORDS:
rural transit, section 5311, 5311 transit