Evaluation of Alabama’s 5310 and 5311 Providers to Ensure Compliance

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UTCA Report Number 04402
January 2008
**Abstract**

The State of Alabama is responsible for ensuring transit agency’s that receive money to operate Section 5310 and 5311 programs within the state meet specific maintenance and operator regulations established by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) contracted with the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) to serve as an impartial, third party monitor for the agencies. Roughly 140 5310 agencies and 26 5311 agencies were reviewed for ALDOT with individual reports being prepared for each agency as directed.
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Executive Summary

The Alabama Department of Transportation contracted the Triennial Management Review duties for the state’s roughly 140,5310 agencies and 27,5311 agencies to researchers at the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH). During a roughly three-year period, UAH researchers performed a site visit to each property to ensure the agency was following the operational rules created by the Federal Transit Administration. For each agency, a complete report documenting the agency’s adherence to the rules and summary of any findings were developed and provided directly to personnel at the Alabama Department of Transportation.
1.0 Introduction

The State of Alabama is responsible for monitoring the activities of the Section 5310 and 5311 transportation providers operating vehicles within the state. These monitoring activities are intended to verify that agencies operating vehicles under these programs are meeting with specific maintenance and operator regulations established by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Currently, the Alabama Department of Transportation is responsible for these monitoring activities. However, with limited staff time and already facing large demands on the existing staff, this project transferred the monitoring requirements to the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) to serve as an impartial, third party monitor. The following project report presents a review of the work completed.
2.0 Review of the 5310 Providers

The scope of work for the review of the 5310 providers was divided into four distinct tasks, development of the monitoring checklist, calibration of the site visits, performance the site visits, and the development of final reports. Figure 2-1 shows the location of the 5310 providers in Alabama.

![Figure 2-1. Location of Alabama 5310 providers](image)

The initial task was the development of a monitoring checklist for the site visits to the 5310 properties. This task was actually completed by personnel from within the Alabama Department of Transportation.
The second task was to work with Alabama Department of Transportation personnel to calibrate the items form the checklist using a sample agency. This calibration effort was necessary to ensure UAH reviewers properly identified agency items, thus reducing the potential for return visits to agencies to complete missing items. The research team at UAH performed several reviews accompanied by Alabama Department of Transportation personnel until given permission to complete the remainder of the review unassisted.

The third task was to perform the site visits to each of 5310 properties. As the monitoring arrangements required the gathering of information on a three-year cycle, the total section 5310 providers were randomly selected into year-one, year-two and year-three providers, done by Alabama Department of Transportation personnel, and site visits were made in the appropriate year. UAH research personnel were responsible for contacting each agency and making the appropriate arrangements for the visit. In total, approximately 140 - 5310 properties were visited during the three time-frames.

The final task was the reporting of results from the site visits to the Alabama Department of Transportation. The format of the report included a typed version of the questionnaire completed to show the agency information and for the most recent year of the agencies, a sheet identifying a summary of findings.
3.0 Review of the 5311 Providers

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) defines a rural transit system as any system that provides service to non-urbanized areas or more specifically in communities with a population less than 50,000. As transportation services are a vital component to our lives, the federal government provides financial assistance to these rural transit systems through program 49 U.S.C. Section 5311, commonly referred to as the 5311 Program. The Alabama Department of Transportation’s Multimodal Transportation Bureau is responsible for oversight of the state’s rural public transit system. Within the state, there were 27 service providers located throughout the state, as shown in Figure 3-1. With the involvement in the program by the FTA, the agency has mandated that all states perform on-site performance reviews of each 5311 property during a three-year cycle. This report documents to the Alabama Department of Transportation the completion of on-site performance reviews for the 5311 properties. Additionally, UAH researchers prepared necessary reports for the agencies to the Alabama Department of Transportation.

Figure 3-1. Location of the 27 5311 providers in Alabama
The scope of work for this project was defined into three main tasks: (1) review the performance evaluation questionnaire, (2) perform on-site visits of all 5311 properties, and (3) prepare final reports as required by ALDOT.

The initial task in this project was to review the performance evaluation questionnaire developed by the Alabama Department of Transportation. This review included an examination of the questions currently on the survey, identified the appropriate documents to be reviewed, and prepared for the on-site visit. This task was performed in close cooperation with personnel from the Alabama Department of Transportation. In addition, the performance questionnaire was examined for potential to be included into a database management system to allow for ease of completion and report development, however, this was performed but the amount of data collected and variety of the responses limited it usefulness in support the completion of the surveys and was not used.

The on-site visits of all 5311 properties in the state comprised the majority of this study. A total of 26 agencies were visited during the three-year period (Northwest Alabama Mental Health Foundation, Inc. ceased operations as a 5311 provider, and an agency in Eufaula which joined the program during the visit cycle was not visited as they were new to the program). The schedule and selection of properties was agreed upon with input from Alabama Department of Transportation personnel to ensure that the project will be completed in a timely manner.

The final task of this proposed project was the development of the reports necessary to satisfy ALDOT monitoring requirement. These reports were based on the example provided by the Multimodal Transportation Bureau. The deliverable for this proposed work included one final report for each of the 5311 properties reviewed during the study.
4.0 Conclusions

The State of Alabama is responsible for monitoring the activities of the Section 5310 and 5311 transportation providers operating vehicles within the state. These monitoring activities are intended to verify that agencies operating vehicles under these two programs are meeting with specific maintenance and operator regulations established by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) served as an impartial, third party monitor and was able to complete the review of the 5310 and 5311 agencies within Alabama to satisfy the FTA reporting requirements.