Research Needs for Mobility and Freight Modes  
Technical Advisory Group  
Effective / Updated: 9/1/2023

1. Issue Identified:

Funding Needs of State of Illinois ADA/Paratransit Operations

2. Summary of Problem:

The Americans with Disability Act mandates transit operators to offer ADA/paratransit service that is complimentary to their fixed-route services. The State of Illinois provides funding to support these services but does not cover the full cost of providing this service. For example, in Northeastern Illinois, Pace Suburban Bus operates the ADA/paratransit service for the Regional Transportation Authority’s service area. For the RTA region, the FY23 annual budget for the ADA/paratransit service is $250 million with $8.9 million (3%) appropriated by the state, leaving local resources to fund the remaining costs. Additionally, the future provides uncertainty from an aging population, recovery from the pandemic which may have shifted supply and demand, and service delivery shifting from fixed-route to on-demand models.

3. Desired Results / Outcome

The purpose of the research is to collect current and historic data on total costs of State of Illinois transit operators for the provision of ADA/paratransit service. Ten years of data would provide historical trends and understanding of impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Data would include ridership (trips, passenger miles), service supply (vehicle hours, vehicle miles, workforce and numbers and capacity of vehicles), productivity measures, operating costs, funding sources, and other data useful from a statewide scan. Additionally, any contraction or expansion of service areas would be identified over the past 10 years.

A set of relevant other states will be established, and a review of these states’ funding mechanisms will be conducted. Researchers will also consider other relevant data to collect that will provide understanding and context of the State of Illinois against other states’ approaches to providing ADA/paratransit service.

A methodology would also be developed to estimate ADA/paratransit demand changes due to demographic trends or other factors influencing demand. Costs, performance measures, and economic factors would be examined to identify cost drivers in the past and assessed for future impacts to total costs.

This research will help transit agencies across the state better understand supply, demand, and cost drivers for future operations and budget planning. The research will also help public policy influencers and decision-makers to understand existing funding levels required by the state’s ADA/paratransit services and assess funding levels for future needs.