1. Issue Identified:

Minimizing Urban/Rural “Gray Areas” in Transit Operations in Illinois

2. Summary of Problem:

Public transit operations funding in Illinois comes from a mix of federal, state, regional, and local sources, each with certain restrictions. One of the restrictions tied to federal transit operations funding requires only using certain funding within a region's urbanized area, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. This creates a problem where a resident in a rural area just outside of an urbanized area can request a demand-response ride with the county’s rural transit provider, while someone just within the urbanized area cannot. Meanwhile, there may be no fixed-route service in the areas removed from denser urban cores but still in the urbanized area. For residents in these “gray areas,” there is no transit service they can use; meanwhile, their neighbors outside of the urbanized area have demand-response ready to take them where needed.

3. Desired Results / Outcome:

This “gray area” of service is something that requires further study to determine: i) where these areas exist in Illinois; ii) what options transit agencies in these areas currently have, including coordination with the agencies serving the rural areas; and iii) whether there is anything IDOT can do to promote additional service in these areas while remaining in full compliance with all required funding restrictions. Researchers would work with transit agencies, nonprofit organizations, and other stakeholders to determine the best ways to service the transportation needs of residents in these areas across Illinois.