



An USDA-sponsored economics conference within the

**National Conference on Rural Public
and Intercity Bus Transportation**

Ashville, NC, October 2-5, 2016

Call for Participants (Funding Available)

Established and early career professionals (including Ph.D. students) with a strong interest in rural transportation and / or elderly issues are invited to participate in a subconference on the economics of transportation for the rural elderly which is part of the 2016 National Conference on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation (RIBT). Organizers will cover travel and conference expenses for selected participants, who will be expected to subsequently collaborate on a white paper and other published materials related to transportation for the rural elderly and disadvantaged populations.

Participants will engage in discussions with transportation experts through the RIBT conference. The economics section will also meet independently during the conference to develop a white paper on the needs for economic research related to rural transportation, especially among the elderly and disadvantaged populations. Collaboration is expected to continue via email and post-conference web-meetings to finalize the white paper, outreach materials, presentations at academic conferences, and a journal article.

As with all important social issues, many disciplines are involved in research concerning mobility for the rural elderly and other disadvantaged populations. Research on the economics of public transportation targeting these groups, however, is scant. Interactions between economists, transportation researchers, and service providers, while currently limited, are crucial to improving the efficiency of rural transportation services. The need for improved rural transit for the targeted populations is significant because many rural communities have aging populations and widely varying transportation opportunities. The aging baby boomer generation only intensifies this situation.

The long-term goal of the proposed economic conference is to enhance the provision of rural transportation options that strengthen regional economies and improve the quality of life for the rural elderly and other disadvantaged rural populations. Effective improvements in rural transportation for the elderly will lead to rural community development and overall general improvements in transportation in rural settings. Research-based improvements in the transportation sector are also expected to inform research and policy in other aspects of regional rural service provisions.

The project aims to catalyze research on the economics of transportation for the rural elderly by convening established and early career professionals with an interest in rural transportation topics to identify priorities, establish a network of collaborators, and publish pieces that can be used to help obtain research funding. Further, the white paper will provide guidance to the USDA and other agencies on transportation needs of rural, agriculture-dominated communities.

The National Conference on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation (<http://www.ribtc.org/>) offers best practices and current research in mobility and access in rural communities, and it is a valuable experience for rural transit and human service transit providers, tribal transit managers, planners, state agency staff, intercity bus operators, consultants, researchers and trainers. The conference includes multiple routes to offer learning opportunities throughout the conference for everyone: planning and design; policy, funding and finance; rural transportation in today's operating environment; technology and training solutions; and special topics in rural mobility. The conference also provides a unique opportunity to interact with both transit operators and government officials.

To apply, a statement of interest and a two-page vita should be submitted to Rebekka Dudensing at rmdudensing@tamu.edu by May 16, 2016 or until space is filled. The conference organizers will cover selected participants' costs associated with early conference fees, transportation, lodging and per diem, subject to the guidelines of the organizing and funding institutions. Participants are expected to familiarize themselves with the packet of literature provided prior to the conference and to participate in the creation of published materials following the conference.

For more information, contact economics conference organizers: James Mjelde, Texas A&M University, j-mjelde@tamu.edu, (979) 845-1492; Rebekka Dudensing, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, rmdudensing@tamu.edu, (979) 845-1719; or Jonathan Brooks, Texas A&M Transportation Institute, j-brooks@tti.tamu.edu, (713) 613-9206.

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