State DOT Staff Resources for Administering Federal Public Transportation Programs

DETAILS

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STATE DOT STAFF RESOURCES FOR ADMINISTERING FEDERAL PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS

This digest summarizes the results of NCHRP Project 20-65(7). The digest was prepared by KFH Group, Inc., in association with Cambridge Systematics. Appendices A through E of the contractor's final report are available as *NCHRP Web-Only Document 99* at http://trb.org/news/blurb_detail.asp?id=7364.

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PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

The primary objectives of this research project were to collect information on the staff resources that state departments of transportation (DOTs) devote to public transportation programs and to evaluate the ability of the states to adequately administer existing and emerging Federal Transit Administration (FTA) public transportation programs. A secondary objective of the project was to develop a method for regularly updating the data in future years.

It is anticipated that the study results will be used to help state transit managers evaluate the adequacy of staffing levels for the administration of federal and state transit programs within their states. As such, there are two audiences for the report:

1. State departments of transportation. The report documents what is involved in the grants administration function and what resources are devoted to administering transit programs at state DOTs.
2. The FTA. The report should lead to a better understanding of state staffing limitations and the states' ability to hire additional staff.

As discussed in detail in the section on research conclusions, the research suggests that most states do not have the staff resources needed to adequately manage the federal transit programs. Further, state options for hiring staff are limited, even with the availability of additional federal funds. Finally, while there is little staff turnover reported, state DOTs have difficulty attracting new staff to transit positions and may be headed for a crisis as staff members retire.

STUDY PROCESS

One of the initial tasks for the project was to develop a detailed survey plan, including refining and finalizing the survey process and instrument. This involved a review of stakeholder comments that affect the research. Selected members of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials' (AASHTO's) Standing Committee on Public Transport (SCOPT) and Multi-State Technical Assistance Program (MTAP) were contacted by phone, e-mail, or both. The survey plan was drafted and discussed with the project panel members during a conference call. During the discussions with panel members,

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decisions were made on the following issues affecting the research effort:

- **Compensation data.** It was decided that actual salary levels and benefits were not as important as the number of staff positions. Thus, the survey did not collect information on or report on compensation.
- **Job categorization.** It was determined that staff skill levels/qualifications would be too hard to compare among states; therefore, detailed information on staff qualifications was not collected. However, to assist in collecting data, job categories were "benchmarked" and described on the basis of core job functions.
- **State versus federal programs.** There were conflicting viewpoints on whether the research should concentrate on federally mandated programs only or whether the research should also address the need to administer the state-funded programs (in recognition of the fact that some states have extensive state transit funding programs that are administered along with the federal programs). It was decided that the team would collect information on the approximate number of state staff members needed to administer the various federal programs and also collect information on staffing levels for entire transit units.
- **Data collection.** The research team tested the data collection process for three states. It was originally thought that the preferred method for data collection would be some type of electronic survey—either a formatted word-processing document or a spreadsheet. However, after conferring with stakeholders and testing the draft survey instrument, it became clear that it was necessary to account for the many variations in how states organize to administer transit programs. Capturing these variations was difficult using a written questionnaire, regardless of how well it was structured or the questions were written. Thus, during the initial year of the survey, data were collected using a telephone interview.

All states were contacted by phone with a follow-up e-mail. In total, 34 states responded and were surveyed. The telephone survey instrument is included in Appendix A, and summaries of the non-confidential data for each state are included in Appendix B. Appendix C includes the contact information for each state DOT. Appendices A through E of this digest are published as *NCHRP Web-Only Document 99,* available at http://trb.org/news/blurb_detail.asp?id=7364.

As noted above, in order to collect information on staff levels at state DOTs by job title, it was necessary to create standard or "benchmarked" job categories. Attempts were made to collect data by job category during the survey process (see Appendix D for a list and description of the jobs included in the survey).

BACKGROUND ISSUES

Two important background issues in the consideration of state staffing needs are the core functions involved in the administration of federal and state transit programs and current conditions at state DOTs. Some challenges and current issues: facing state DOTs as they manage the federal and state transit grants that fund transit services in the state are the following:

- The grant administration core functions and responsibilities of state transit programs are complex and not well understood outside the state transit arena,
- State responsibilities for administration of transit programs/funds have been increasing and continue to increase, and
- Variations in how states manage the federal transit programs make it difficult to estimate staffing needs for those programs.

These management challenges and current issues are described below.

Complexity of Grant Administration Core Functions and Responsibilities

In order to evaluate whether state DOTs have adequate transit staff, it is important to be aware of the broad and complex core functions required to manage state and federal transit programs. Table 1 presents a summary list of the core functions required. Administering federal and state grants takes place on three levels:

1. Managing the relationship with the federal government and the reporting and grant processes at the federal level—FTA (FTA headquarters and the regional office),
2. Managing and planning activities required by state government (legislative, budgeting/

Table 1 Core functions of state transit grant management

Policy Development
- Assist policy body in development of transit policies
- Analyze state and federal legislation and regulations to determine transportation funding impact
- Convey policies to stakeholders
- Represent state in public transit matters, including public information and outreach
- Be aware of legislative developments (e.g., respond to legislative requests)
- Participate in AASHTO and MTAP

Administration and Finance
- Manage transit unit, including staff assignments
- Develop and maintain budgets for transit unit and each funding program
- Oversee budget
- Manage human resources
- Manage FTA audits

Education and Outreach
- Support local grantees
- Communicate with the public and establish strong community relations
- Communicate with the legislature on a regular basis
- Coordinate with other state and federal agencies

Support
- Manage transit database
- Support transit information systems
- Create and maintain a transit program and procedures manual

Information Technology (IT) and Technology Support
- Provide IT support internally for transit unit
- Provide IT and technology support for operators

Grants Administration—Federal Grants
- Maintain updated state management plans for S.5311 and S.5310 programs (now S.5316 and S.5317)
- Submit annual grant application to FTA for each federal grant program based on local applications
- Report to FTA by activity line item (Financial Status Report and Milestone Progress Report)
- Administer FTA's Transportation Electronic Award Management (TEAM) system to apply for grants and to manage grants after award
- Administer FTA's payment procedures through Electronic Clearing House Operation (ECHO) payments

Grant Administration—Local Operator Grants
- Allocate S.5311, S.5310, S.5316, and S.5317 funds to local grantees/operators
- Solicit and review grant applications for operating and capital funds (application includes narrative scope, budget, and milestones [timeline] for implementation as well as signed certifications and assurances)
  - Distribute, review, and submit grant applications
  - Participate in team reviews of responses
  - Manage S.5310 allocation (manage state/local coordinating groups, establish and submit list of prioritized projects, fulfill unique civil rights requirements)
  - Manage S.5311 allocation (evaluate transit agency applications using criteria established)
  - Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC)—new state-administered federal program
  - New Freedom—new state-administered federal program
- Develop letters of intent for grantees (pending final state and federal grant approval)
- Manage and process grant agreements, amendments, and budget revisions
- Receive and review grant reimbursement requests
- Process grantee reimbursement requests and track expenditures
- Process payments
- Track grant expenditures
- Receive and process data and reports from operators
- Close out grant

Table 1 (Continued)

Audit, Oversight, and Monitoring
- Conduct performance monitoring of grantees
- Participate in FTA program audits
- Oversee any district staff managing transit programs
- Monitor and report drug and alcohol use (report to FTA)
- Monitor transit agencies to ensure compliance with state and federal rules and regulations (visit and monitor S.5310 and S.5311 grantees quarterly)
- Document on-site monitoring
  - Determine level of deficiency in all areas of noncompliance
  - Determine improvement action plans
  - Develop and carry out an improvement action plan in consultation with transit agency (often written concurrence is needed for major deficiency)
  - Monitor any amendments and completion
- Document informal monitoring activity and retain site visit documentation

Technical Assistance to Grantees
- Provide assistance as requested

Grants Administration—Capital Program
- Manage statewide S.5309 bus and bus-related capital program, as needed
- Maintain public transportation management systems
- Determine which vehicles can be replaced and inform operators
- Inventory and coordinate disposition and transfer of equipment/facilities
- Procure vehicles on statewide basis or oversee grantee procurements
- Respond to requests for capital concurrences
- Inspect capital assets and vehicles on delivery
- Provide fleet planning, management, and support
- Maintain inventory of real property purchased with federal funds
- Oversee subrecipients' vehicle and facility maintenance plans
- Ensure subrecipient procurements contain all federally required clauses, certifications, and assurances (e.g., Buy America) pre- and post-delivery

Planning
- Ensure projects are placed in the transportation improvement program through the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) process
- Develop and submit state transportation improvement program
- Develop new regional plans focusing on coordination
- Fund and oversee local planning
- Develop and maintain statewide transit master plan
- Research planning, as appropriate
- Administer S.5303 planning grants (MPOs)
- Administer S.5313 planning grants (now S.5304)

Safety and Security
- Oversee rail
- Provide bus safety and security planning and technical assistance

Training, Staff Development, and Research
- Develop and maintain training program for state staff
- Develop training and technical assistance for local operators (Rural Technical Assistant Program [RTAP] for local operators)

Special Projects
- Develop new grant programs (e.g., JARC, United We Ride)

fiscal, planning, coordination with other modes/rest of DOT), and
3. Managing the relationship with the regional and local subgrantees as well as the reporting, oversight, and grant processes with regional and local subgrantees.

It is clear from the research that transit program management at the state level is a difficult job, and there is little understanding of that complexity outside of the state DOT transit units. Every program, current or new, requires state program administrators to manage parallel and often identical, overlapping, or concurrent elements—including the following:

- Rules, regulations, and requirements on all matters of fund flow/administration, often with approval of FTA;
- Separate, discrete application processes, documents, and timetables;
- Necessary "certifications";
- Funding allocations, often arrived at with partners;
- Fund tracking and administrative actions for obligations and payments;
- Project review and evaluation processes; and
- Regular and periodic program oversight activities, requirements, and reports.

Increasing State Responsibility for Administering Transit Programs

FTA has transferred responsibility for federal program administration to the states. A critical component of this study is the review of federal transit programs that are administered by the states. Over the past two decades, the FTA has been transferring administrative responsibility for many of its programs to the states. The growing level of total federal funds is the direct result of additional available funds obligated by FTA within each program, coupled with new programs established through federal legislation. This growth in the state-administered federal programs is presented graphically in Figure 1 and in Table 2. Appendix E includes a brief history of the federal funding stream.

In major transportation legislative bills since 1991—ISTEA, TEA-21, and SAFETEA-LU—an

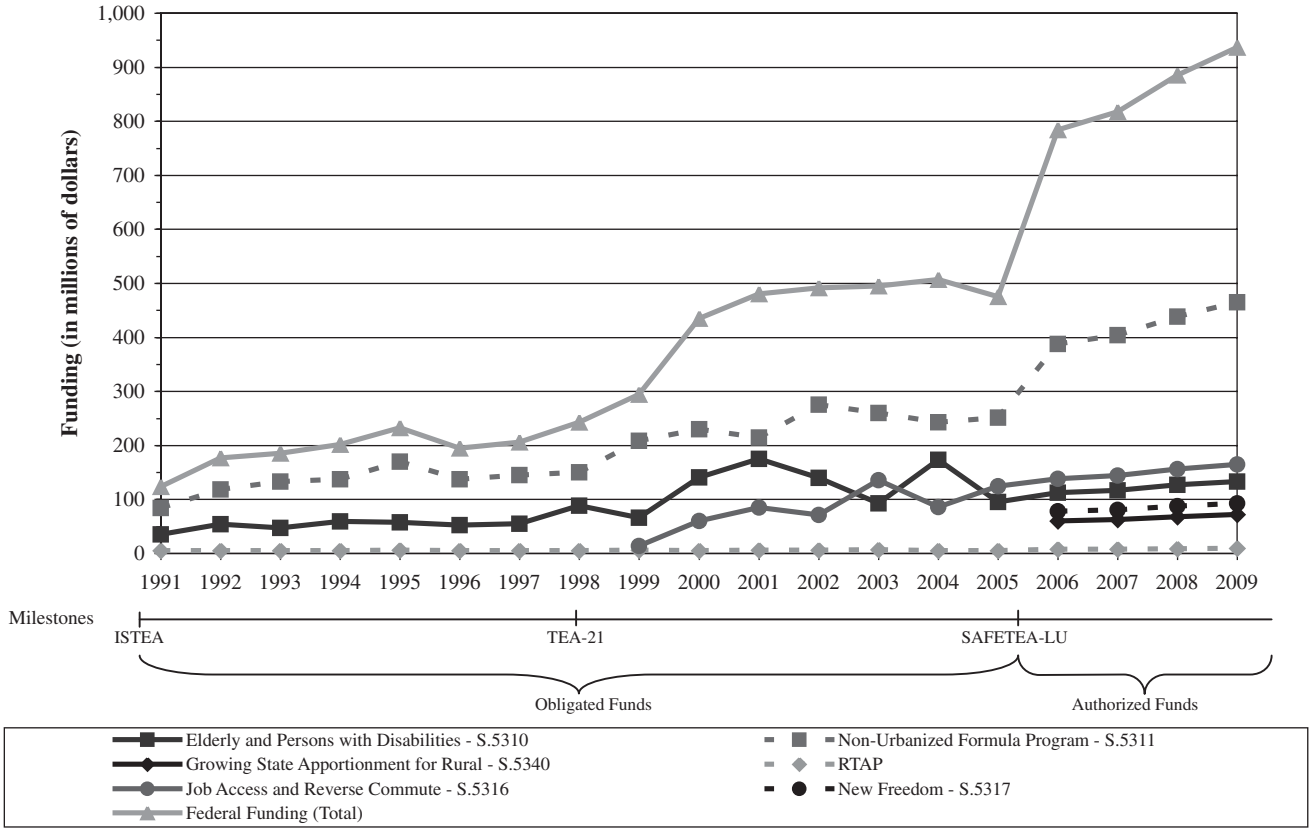

Figure 1 Federal transit programs administered by the states.

Table 2 State-administered federal funds by program

	Federal Transit Programs Administered by the States						
	Elderly and Persons with Disabilities (S.5310) $M*	Non-Urbanized Formula Program (S.5311) $M*	Growing State Apportionment for Rural (S.5340) $M*	RTAP $M*	Job Access and Reverse Commute (S.5316) $M*	New Freedom (S.5317) $M*	Federal Funding (Total) $M*
1991	34.8	83.8	–	5.2	–	–	123.8
1992	53.7	118.1	–	4.9	–	–	176.7
1993	46.8	133.1	–	5.5	–	–	185.4
1994	58.9	137.1	–	5.2	–	–	201.2
1995	57.7	169.4	–	5.6	–	–	232.7
1996	52.0	137.6	–	5.0	–	–	194.6
1997	55.3	145.1	–	5.1	–	–	205.5
1998	88.0	149.7	–	5.4	–	–	243.1
1999	66.2	208.3	–	5.8	14.1	–	294.4
2000	140.3	229.6	–	4.9	60.1	–	434.9
2001	175.0	214.1	–	6.4	85.0	–	480.5
2002	140.0	275.1	–	5.8	70.8	–	491.7
2003	92.9	259.7	–	6.8	135.6	–	495.0
2004	173.4	242.4	–	5.3	86.0	–	507.1
2005	95.0	251.0	–	5.2	124.0	–	475.2
2006	112.0	388.0	60.0	7.8	138.0	78.0	783.8
2007	117.0	404.0	63.0	8.1	144.0	81.0	817.1
2008	127.0	438.0	68.0	8.7	156.0	87.5	885.2
2009	133.0	465.0	72.0	9.3	165.0	92.5	936.8

*Funds in millions of dollars, not adjusted for inflation (federal authorization levels)

NOTES:

Does not include statewide or metropolitan planning; federal statewide planning funds range from $12M–$20M from 2005–2009.

Does not include the small urban programs, some of which are also administered by the states.

Includes entire program amount for RTAP—the state's share is typically 85 percent.

Does not include Federal Bus/Bus Facility Grants—non-urbanized portion ranges from $45M–$54M from 2006–2009.

– indicates that no data are available because the program did not yet exist.

infusion of funds has been channeled to the transit industry, and states are being expected to administer more and more of these funds. There are some anomalies along the way; for example, Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) funding declined because Congress transferred $45 million to the New Starts program. Overall, however, funding levels have either remained constant or increased through the years. The dollar amounts in Table 2 would look even larger if they included the following:

- Statewide or metropolitan planning (Federal Statewide Planning funds range from $12 million in 2005 to $20 million in 2009);
- Small urban programs, some of which are also administered by the states; and
- Federal Bus/Bus Facility Grants (the non-urbanized portion ranges from $45 million in 2006 to $54 million in 2009).

SAFETEA-LU restructures some FTA programs to give even more administrative responsibility to the states. Under SAFETEA-LU, states continue to administer the current formula programs under S.5311 (Non-urbanized), S.5307 (Small Urban), S.5310 (Elderly and Disabled), and S.5313 (Planning). In addition, programs under S.5316 (JARC) and S.5317 (New Freedom Program) are now state-administered, with funds under these programs provided as flexible formula grants to the states. SAFETEA-LU also includes additional coordinated planning requirements. This will add significantly to

the responsibilities of most state public transit divisions. Survey results indicate that state DOTs think these new programs will have a major impact on staff requirements.

Other core functions of state DOT public transit sections are increasing. In addition to increased responsibilities for managing new and expanding FTA public transit grant programs, general state oversight responsibilities for all transit programs have grown significantly in the past 5 years. The survey indicates that state transit staff are negatively affected by taking on a number of new functions, including rail safety for new projects, increased drug and alcohol requirements, human service coordination, bus and rail safety and security, consolidated planning grants, welfare-to-work program issues, and non-emergency medical transportation. Because staffing levels have not increased, existing staff members must absorb many of these functions, or limited administrative funds must be used to hire consultants to handle these responsibilities. It appears that the increase in staff responsibilities may be contributing to problems with recruiting state DOT staff to fill transit management jobs.

State staffing levels have not been increasing in response to the growth in FTA programs. As state-administered federal funds increase, administrative responsibility for these funds also increases. As part of the survey of the states, existing staffing levels were requested for each transit unit over the past 5 to 6 years. Based on responses from 29 states, the total full-time employees (FTEs) were calculated by year from 2000 through 2006. Interestingly, the staffing levels were at their highest—519 FTEs—in 2000, as federal funding levels were being increased because of TEA-21. A steady decline in staffing occurred over the next 6 years—with the low point, 442 FTEs, set in 2006—even though funding continued to increase each year. These data are presented graphically in Table 3.

Looking beyond 2006, seven states surveyed indicated that some staffing increases will occur; 3 of 30 states indicated that they will be hiring to expand their staff, and an additional 4 indicated that they would be hiring to fill open vacancies. It is anticipated that staffing levels for the states that responded will grow to 462 FTEs, presumably to address the additional funds and programs established in SAFETEA-LU. Even so, this level is well below the high of 519 FTEs in 2000. This modest increase is especially interesting when authorized funding is expected to almost double from 2000 to 2009.

State-sponsored transit programs are expanding. Since 1990, there has been a significant increase in overall state transit funding and the number of new, stand-alone state transit programs. One key difference among states is both the level and nature of state transit funding, which often reflect how the state views its role in the provision of public transit. Since 1990, state funding for transit has been increasing as follows:[1]

- 1990—$3.7 billion
- 1995—$4.8 billion
- 2000—$7.5 billion
- 2005—$9.5 billion

State DOTs administer much of this funding, either in conjunction with the federal program (using state funding as local match) or as separate, discrete, state-sponsored programs. According to the latest (2005) Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) survey (see Footnote 1), the vast majority of states have some funding for transit (only four states don't have funding). Some states use state dollars solely to match the federal funds before the funds are granted to local transit systems. But 17 of the 34 states responding to the survey have additional state-sponsored transit programs. Again, much of this increased workload is being absorbed by existing staff.

Variations in State Management of Federal Transit Programs Affect Staffing Needs

States vary widely in how they manage their transit programs, both in how they organize to get the work accomplished and in how the programs are integrated into the rest of the DOT. These variations do not seem to be related to the overall size of the program as much as they are related to the role that transit plays in the state, the level of state dollars involved (more state dollars makes transit more visible in the DOT), how mature the state programs are, and the prevailing state philosophy of governance (e.g., whether transit is more of a "state" or "local" issue).

In most states, the federal programs are not managed as discrete programs. It is not easy to estimate the number of staff working only on federal programs because often it is difficult or impossible to determine DOT staffing involved solely in federal programs. In some cases, the research team was able to estimate the FTEs required for federal program

[1]Bureau of Transportation Statistics, *Survey of State Funding for Public Transportation,* Prepared by U.S. Department of Transportation, 2005.

Table 3 State staff levels (FTEs) in transit units

	Current Staffing Levels									
	Total FTEs in Transit Unit			History of Staffing Levels						
				FTEs 2000–2006						
State	Number of FTEs Approved Including Vacant	Number of Positions Currently Filled	Estimated Total Involved in Federal Program Administration*	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Alabama	9	9	9	5	5	5	5	9	9	9
Alaska	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2
Arizona	14	13	13	10	10	10	10	14	13	13
California	100	95	34	150	135	105	105	100	100	95
Colorado	6	3	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	3
Connecticut	24	24	19							
Florida	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21
Georgia	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12
Hawaii	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5
Idaho	9	9	9	8	8	8	8	8	8	9
Illinois	34	24	20							
Indiana	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Maine	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Maryland	12	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
Massachusetts	17	17	10	9	9	11	10	11	11	10
Michigan	28	28	28	50	50	50	43	36	28	28
Minnesota	34	25	12	20	20	20	20	20	20	25
Missouri	7	7	7	6	6	6	6	6	7	7
Nevada	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
New Hampshire	4.5	4.5	4.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	4.5	4.5
New York	43	33	32	42	42	42	38	38	33	33
North Carolina	25	31	29	31	31	31	31	31	31	29
Ohio	17	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13
Oklahoma	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Oregon	14	13	13							
Pennsylvania	26	23	6	25	25	24	24	23	23	23
South Dakota	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1
Texas	39	39	39	39	39	39	39	39	39	39
Utah	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	5
Virginia	13	13	9	11	11	11	11	12	13	13
Washington	27	24	8							
West Virginia	10	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
Wisconsin	11	8	8	12	12	12	11	7	8	8
Total	589.3	536.3	406.3	519.3	504.3	475.3	462.3	455.3	445.3	442.3

*Estimated based on discussions with DOTs—often same as total because they could not segregate.

administration, but in most cases staff members are organized by core function or geography rather than by dedication to the various federal programs. It is very difficult to allocate staff members' time among programs, particularly for states that are organized by core functions and also have state programs.

Job categorization and staff responsibilities are not standardized. As indicated above, the research team expended considerable effort to "benchmark" jobs and staff responsibilities based on core functions required to manage transit programs at the state DOT level. The standard job classifications developed for

the data collection—in order to collect "apples to apples" comparisons of staffing levels—were based on the core functions needed to administer the FTA programs. However, while each state covers most of the core functions, they have created job titles and responsibilities that "mix and match" those functions (e.g., in some states, compliance monitoring is handled by the local grant coordinators, while in other states they have a staff person devoted to this function). During the survey effort, an attempt was made to collect information on the number of staff members for each job title or category. This listing did allow the research team to review the various core functions with the respondents; however, because of variations in how states define the roles of various staff members, it was not possible to classify state staff using the job categories.

Some conclusions can be reached concerning staff functions:

- All states have a transit manager/unit head (some state transit managers have other responsibilities, often with modes such as air or rail, or also function as the local grant coordinator).
- Most states have a number of local grant coordinators who deal with the local grantees on most grant management tasks (either at headquarters or the district).
- How states handle other functions (planning, compliance monitoring, vehicle procurement, etc.) varies considerably.

SURVEY RESULTS

Organizational Issues

It was felt that the way in which the state DOTs organize to administer federal and state transit funds is important because these organizational relationships could affect the number and types of staff needed. As mentioned above, the ways that states organize transit programs are as varied as the states themselves. Table 4 presents basic organizational information for the survey respondents.

How the Transit Program Fits into the State DOT

- Most federal grants are administered in the state DOT's transit unit. For two states that responded, the state department of human resources administered the S.5310 program.
- The transit unit is generally a stand-alone section, bureau, or division, although some are part of a larger multimodal unit.
- The head of the transit unit is generally two to four layers down from the DOT secretary or executive director, although in a number of states the public transit director reports directly to the secretary of transportation (in at least one case, this is by state code).
- Only a few states directly operate transit services. In most of these states, the federal programs are administered by a division within the state DOT that is devoted to passing funds through to other operators and/or subgrantees. In some states, the state operates services statewide and uses the federal funds as part of their operating budget.
- Most transit unit heads have some legislative responsibilities, generally working closely with the DOT legislative liaisons or offices.
- Many DOT transit units rely on other parts of the DOT for core functions—primarily fiscal/budgeting, planning, legislative liaison, and human resources. Sometimes, other parts of the DOT provide services related to procurement, rail safety, safety/security, drug and alcohol, and general administration/clerical. Some of these functions are areas that other states are not performing (e.g., planning and legislative).

How the Program Functions Are Organized

- The transit units often administer the federal and state funding as a joint package—this is particularly true if state funds are intended to be a portion of the nonfederal match required under the federal programs. However, about half the states responding have some separate, distinct state programs that go beyond contributing to the nonfederal share and require separate grant management processes and procedures.
- Only a few states use their DOT district office staff; when they do, it is generally as the local grant administrator. In cases where district office staff members are involved, they either report directly to the district engineers or are housed at the district but report to the transit section.
- During the interviews, it became apparent that the transit sections in many DOTs are changing

Table 4 Basic organizational characteristics of state transit programs

State	Transit Unit Name	Use District Office Staff?	Direct Operation of Transit?	Organized by:		
				Core Function	Grant Program	Combination
Alabama	Bureau of Multimodal Transportation	no	no			X
Alaska	Division of Program Development/Statewide Systems	no	no			X
Arizona	Public Transit Division	no	no		X	
California	Division of Mass Transit/Federal Transit Grants Office	yes	yes			X
Colorado	Intermodal Planning Branch, Modal Program Section	no	no			X
Connecticut	Bureau of Public Transit	no	yes	X		
Florida	State Transit Programs Office	yes	no	X		
Georgia	Office of Intermodal Programs/Transit Programs Section	yes	no	X		
Hawaii	Statewide Transportation Planning Office/Programming Staff Division	no	no			X
Idaho	Division of Public Transportation	no	no			X
Illinois	Division of Public and Intermodal Transportation	no	no	X		
Indiana	Division of Local Programs/Office of Transit	no	no		X	
Maine	Office of Passenger Transportation	no	no		X	
Maryland	Office of Planning/Statewide Planning	no	yes			X
Massachusetts	Federal Transit Administration Program Unit/Office of Transportation Programs	no	no		X	
Michigan	Multi-Modal Transportation Services Bureau/Passenger Transportation Division	no	no			X
Minnesota	Office of Transit/Transit Programs Section	yes	no	X		
Missouri	Multimodal Operations/Transit Section	no	no			X
Nevada	Planning Division/Transit Section	no	no	X		
New Hampshire	Bureau of Rail and Transit/Public Transportation Section	no	no	X		
New Jersey	Service Planning and Development and Programs and Grants Management	no	yes			X
New York	Assistance Program Delivery Bureau	no	no			X
North Carolina	Public Transit Division	yes	no	X		
Ohio	Office of Transit	no	no	X		
Oklahoma	Transit Programs Branch	no	no			X
Oregon	Public Transit Division	no	no			X
Pennsylvania	Bureau of Public Transportation	no	no		X	
South Dakota	Office of Local Transportation Programs	no	no	X		
Texas	Public Transit Division	yes	no			X
Utah	Public Transportation Section	no	no		X	
Virginia	Public Transit Division	no	no			X
Washington	Public Transportation and Commute Options Office	no	yes	X		
West Virginia	Division of Public Transit	no	no			X
Wisconsin	Public & Specialized Transit Section	no	no			X

rapidly in response to new federal mandates, new federal programs, and new state initiatives. Change and managing change are not easy for the DOTs or the transit sections. Changing how they do business can mean a change in the organization's culture or can require a change in state regulations. Neither of these is quick or easy.

As discussed, there is no typical organizational structure. Some states organize around programs (S.5311, S.5310, and various state programs) whereas others organize around functions (fiscal, oversight, etc.). There seem to be three basic generalized "models" for how states are organized to manage the federal and state programs:

1. **Staff assigned to particular federal programs.** Some states assign a staff person as the S.5310, S.5311, S.5311(f), RTAP, etc., program manager. This program manager handles most of the grants management functions for the program in their states, including the FTA connection and the connection with the local operators.
2. **Staff assigned to core functions.** Some states assign responsibility by core functional area such as oversight, grant application/grant agreements, and vehicle procurement. These staff members handle their assigned core functions for all grantees in the state.
3. **Staff assigned to specific grantees by geography.** Some states assign subgrantees to staff within a geographic area. These staff members handle all programs for the subgrantees assigned to them.

Most state organizations seem to be hybrids of the three models discussed above. Often, some staff members are assigned as the "point of contact" for the various federal and state transit programs (S.5311, S.5311(f), S.5310, RTAP, etc.). These staff members are generally responsible for the FTA contact, but share the responsibility for local subgrantee management with other staff members at headquarters or in the district offices. They may also have additional core functional responsibilities assigned to them. Other staff members are dedicated to a variety of grant management functions that don't fit into programs or that cut across them (e.g., oversight, vehicle procurements, or fleet management).

Scale/Complexity of the State's Transit Program

The level of staff resources needed at the state level is somewhat proportional to the amount of money being administered (federal and state). However, it is acknowledged that overall program dollars may not be the best indicator of growth and staffing needs; the number of grantees and the complexity of the program may be equally good indicators.

Federal Funding

Table 5 presents the 2005 state-administered federal funds for each state (before SAFETEA-LU increases). This table includes the governor's apportionment of S.5307 funds (for urbanized areas with 50,000 to 200,000 persons), S.5311 funds, S.5310 funds, RTAP funds, and S.5313 state planning and research grants. The totals for each state also include the S.5309 bus/bus-related grants and the S.5316 JARC grants, if the state had statewide grants under these programs. This categorization is not perfect because states have varying levels of responsibility for small urban program funds (some states administer these funds, others pass them through, and others have no involvement). These grants were included because so many states administer the state funds to the small urban grantees. The table includes a final column (shaded) that was used to group the states into three categories—high, medium, and low—based on federal funding for the state-administered programs.

Another measure of the relative scale of the federal programs is the number of subgrantees the state deals with under the federal programs. Table 6 includes both the state-administered federal funds and the number of grantees for the states that responded to the survey. On average, the states deal with an estimated 82 grantees under the federal transit programs. As would be expected, states with higher funding levels have a larger number of grantees. The states surveyed in the low funding category deal with an average of 44 grantees, those states in the medium category deal with an average of 64 grantees, and those in the higher category deal with 113 grantees.

State Funding Programs

Table 6 also includes the state funding for transit from the 2005 Bureau of Transportation Statistics

Table 5 State-administered federal funding levels (2005 apportionments)

State	S.5307—Small Urban Portion Federal Funds	S.5311 Federal Funds	S. 5310 Federal Funds	S. 5309 Capital—Statewide Federal Funds	RTAP Federal Funds	S. 5316 JARC—Statewide Federal Funds	S. 5313 State Planning/Research Federal Funds
Alabama	$6,852,495	$6,978,860	$1,650,319	$971,779	$116,803	$0	$119,785
Alaska	$464,442	$972,688	$245,633	$971,779	$72,220	$0	$63,298
Arizona	$3,223,647	$3,404,552	$1,723,473	$0	$90,271	$0	$241,159
Arkansas	$4,625,723	$5,048,203	$1,071,700	$7,774,226	$102,472	$0	$63,298
California	$47,374,911	$10,727,747	$9,921,776	$0	$144,630	$0	$1,852,405
Colorado	$7,085,157	$3,030,855	$1,207,854	$6,923,920	$87,498	$0	$198,261
Connecticut	$13,780,534	$1,551,423	$1,175,039	$0	$76,516	$2,477,954	$175,771
Delaware	$634,718	$703,397	$363,533	$1,943,557	$70,221	$743,386	$63,298
District of Columbia	$0	$0	$317,549	$0	$0	$2,477,954	$63,298
Florida	$18,662,357	$6,996,634	$6,339,460	$0	$116,935	$0	$831,193
Georgia	$7,445,525	$8,846,033	$2,395,977	$0	$130,663	$0	$309,157
Hawaii	$1,839,591	$1,046,108	$492,379	$0	$72,765	$0	$63,298
Idaho	$3,703,452	$1,922,040	$471,058	$3,401,224	$97,267	$0	$63,298
Illinois	$9,135,581	$7,468,816	$3,683,483	$2,915,335	$120,440	$495,590	$600,865
Indiana	$8,713,703	$7,434,653	$1,952,252	$0	$120,186	$0	$210,477
Iowa	$6,697,140	$5,045,087	$1,020,426	$4,858,891	$102,449	$1,982,362	$68,790
Kansas	$2,831,670	$4,123,403	$917,676	$0	$95,607	$0	$74,531
Kentucky	$2,701,584	$6,892,852	$1,523,636	$0	$116,164	$0	$96,679
Louisiana	$7,441,850	$5,384,375	$1,517,060	$4,858,891	$104,967	$2,477,954	$156,464
Maine	$3,192,839	$2,676,285	$551,948	$2,419,445	$84,866	$1,486,772	$63,298
Maryland	$6,263,110	$2,782,268	$1,611,142	$3,887,113	$85,652	$2,676,190	$265,181
Massachusetts	$3,500,019	$1,988,387	$2,130,002	$0	$79,759	$0	$347,724
Michigan	$11,474,130	$9,357,164	$3,068,922	$2,915,334	$134,457	$0	$405,941

Sorted by Federal Funding Level	Total Federal Funds
Alaska	$2,790,060
DC	$2,858,801
Wyoming	$2,863,206
Hawaii	$3,514,141
Nevada	$4,465,547
Delaware	$4,522,110
Montana	$5,090,675
Nebraska	$5,421,174
South Dakota	$5,469,407
Vermont	$5,896,314
Rhode Island	$6,466,728
New Hampshire	$7,063,439
North Dakota	$7,703,437
Kansas	$8,042,887
Massachusetts	$8,045,891
Oregon	$8,156,995
Mississippi	$8,432,544
Arizona	$8,683,102
New Mexico	$8,974,660
Utah	$9,260,932
Idaho	$9,658,339
Maine	$10,475,453
Kentucky	$11,330,915

Minnesota	$3,751,822	$6,148,482	$1,423,374	$0	$110,639	$0	$167,333	Minnesota	$11,601,650
Mississippi	$1,156,084	$6,028,731	$1,074,681	$0	$109,750	$0	$63,298	New Jersey	$12,492,085
Missouri	$3,778,859	$6,975,170	$1,865,720	$7,774,226	$116,776	$5,451,497	$190,713	West Virginia	$15,583,120
Montana	$2,691,721	$1,860,367	$396,480	$0	$78,809	$0	$63,298	Virginia	$16,476,882
Nebraska	$188,665	$2,523,616	$618,306	$1,943,557	$83,732	$0	$63,298	Alabama	$16,690,041
Nevada	$661,938	$896,619	$749,534	$0	$71,655	$1,982,362	$103,439	South Carolina	$16,990,523
New Hampshire	$4,542,953	$1,904,810	$473,239	$0	$79,139	0	$63,298	Maryland	$17,570,656
New Jersey	$2,190,011	$1,839,641	$2,701,617	$0	$78,655	$5,203,702	$478,459	Indiana	$18,431,271
New Mexico	$2,379,654	$2,664,396	$679,716	$971,779	$84,777	$2,131,040	$63,298	Colorado	$18,533,545
New York	$6,533,594	$9,669,001	$6,366,911	$0	$136,771	$0	$956,735	Arkansas	$18,685,622
North Carolina	$10,482,544	$11,943,227	$2,676,455	$4,858,891	$153,653	$0	$232,070	Georgia	$19,127,355
North Dakota	$3,186,241	$1,145,749	$319,310	$2,915,334	$73,505	$0	$63,298	Connecticut	$19,237,237
Ohio	$8,483,704	$11,256,465	$3,584,027	$5,830,669	$148,555	$0	$451,154	Iowa	$19,775,145
Oklahoma	$2,097,592	$5,478,101	$1,258,480	$5,344,779	$105,663	$7,929,461	$91,550	Washington	$19,897,170
Oregon	$2,746,492	$4,025,063	$1,168,623	$0	$94,877	$0	$121,940	Louisiana	$21,941,561
Pennsylvania	$11,004,519	$11,335,018	$4,225,614	$0	$149,138	$0	$506,672	Oklahoma	$22,305,626
Rhode Island	$0	$334,755	$478,628	$3,887,113	$67,485	$1,635,449	$63,298	New York	$23,663,012
South Carolina	$5,482,335	$5,954,820	$1,441,426	$3,887,113	$109,202	$0	$115,627	Illinois	$24,420,110
South Dakota	$2,448,223	$1,560,313	$349,212	$971,779	$76,582	$0	$63,298	Missouri	$26,152,961
Tennessee	$5,960,978	$7,587,849	$1,997,567	$9,231,893	$121,323	$5,947,088	$182,943	Pennsylvania	$27,220,961
Texas	$31,607,601	$16,865,722	$5,899,696	$0	$190,193	$0	$913,001	Michigan	$27,355,948
Utah	$1,521,407	$1,350,963	$613,923	$5,636,313	$75,028	$0	$63,298	Ohio	$29,754,574
Vermont	$1,088,479	$1,402,132	$302,258	$1,943,557	$75,408	$991,182	$93,298	North Carolina	$30,346,840
Virginia	$7,379,883	$6,587,072	$2,105,191	$0	$113,895	$0	$290,841	Tennessee	$31,029,641
Washington	$10,355,872	$4,429,004	$1,794,704	$971,779	$97,876	$1,982,362	$265,573	Florida	$32,946,579
West Virginia	$5,161,421	$3,601,785	$814,808	$4,858,891	$91,735	$991,182	$63,298	Wisconsin	$40,583,005
Wisconsin	$14,473,942	$7,021,440	$1,641,405	$14,576,628	$117,119	$2,577,071	$175,400	Texas	$55,476,213
Wyoming	$1,440,704	$1,024,486	$262,113	$0	$72,605	$0	$63,298	California	$70,021,469

NOTE: The 2005 apportionments were used since they are pre-SAFETEA-LU funding increases and more relevant for 2006 staffing levels.

Table 6 Funding and grantees from survey respondents

State	2005 Appropriations State-Administered FTA Funds	2005 State Funds from BTS	Estimated Number of Grantees from Surveys*
Low Federal Funding Levels			
Alaska	2,790,060	59,850,000	50
Hawaii	3,514,141	0	19
Nevada	4,465,547	95,000	63
South Dakota	5,469,407	1,891,229	30
New Hampshire	7,063,439	225,000	19
Oregon	8,156,995	26,140,529	
Arizona	8,683,102	20,068,000	81
Average	*5,734,670*	*15,467,108*	*44*
Medium Federal Funding Levels			
Utah	9,260,932	0	47
Idaho	9,658,339	312,000	25
Maine	10,475,453	1,555,000	22
Minnesota	11,601,650	254,527,000	100
New Jersey	12,492,085	910,584,000	60
West Virginia	15,583,120	2,258,342	50
Virginia	16,476,882	115,300,000	62
Alabama	16,690,041	0	88
Maryland	17,570,656	491,425,000	47
Indiana	18,431,271	37,046,940	80
Colorado	18,533,545	0	65
Georgia	19,127,355	8,222,757	123
Connecticut	19,237,237	206,440,541	
Average	*15,010,659*	*155,974,737*	*64*
High Federal Funding Levels			
Massachusetts**	8,045,891	1,197,137,541	30
Washington	19,897,170	30,423,000	150
Oklahoma	22,305,626	3,250,000	35
New York	23,663,012	2,169,005,000	140
Illinois	24,420,110	445,600,000	100
Missouri	26,152,961	6,600,000	119
Pennsylvania	27,220,961	835,223,000	90
Michigan	27,355,948	195,149,300	130
Ohio	29,754,574	18,300,000	61
North Carolina	30,346,840	111,724,897	83
Florida	32,946,579	149,738,231	165
Wisconsin	40,583,005	109,438,341	140
Texas	55,476,213	29,741,067	95
California	70,021,469	1,400,000,000	250
Average	*31,299,311*	*478,666,456*	*113*
Average	***19,807,989***	***259,919,756***	***82***

*The total number of grantees (eliminating duplication for agencies receiving grants under various programs) was estimated based on survey responses and national databases.

**Massachusetts was included in the "high" category due to extraordinary state funding levels.

(BTS) *Survey of State Funding for Public Transportation* (see Footnote 1). This table includes state funding for all transit programs, including large urban areas. As shown, many states have state funding programs that dwarf the federal funds they receive. Most states provide state funding to assist local operators in meeting the nonfederal match requirements. Some states do not officially provide the local match for federal funds, but do have state funding programs that are allowed to be used to match federal funds. Other states have specific funding percentages (i.e., half of the local match). According to the BTS report, only four states did not provide any state funding for transit in 2005.

Further, as noted above, many states have separate state programs that require separate program administration. These are often for elderly/disabled persons, community transit, and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). About one-half of the states responding to the survey have separate state programs that they manage in addition to the federal programs. This is important because these programs often affect state staff workload by involving nontraditional transportation operators and/or requiring separate grant applications, review, grant agreements, and monitoring.

Staff Resources Devoted to Transit Program Management

Number of Staff Members

There appear to be significant variations in the number of staff members involved in administering the federal grants. Table 3 presented the staffing levels for the survey respondents—both current levels and FTEs from 2000 to 2006. As shown, some states report having large staffs devoted to administering their state programs. However, in most cases, because of the way they administer the programs, the respondents were unable to identify the staff that are required to administer only the federal programs. As previously discussed, staff levels showed a steady decline from 2000 through 2006 (with the exception of one state that increased its staff in 2006). Further, when asked whether they anticipated any changes in staff size, most states responded that they expected their staffing levels to remain the same or are uncertain regarding the future. Only three states intend to expand their staffing levels, and only four expect to be able to fill vacancies.

Staffing Relative to Program Size and Complexity

Table 7 presents some preliminary ratios of staff levels to grantees and the state-administered federal funds. It is important to note that the total transit staff was used as the denominator because often the states couldn't separate the state/federal staff and reported the same number of both. As shown, on average, the federal funding level and number of grantees per total staff person are as follows:

Low	$1.4M federal funds	11.8 grantees
Medium	$2.1M federal funds	8.6 grantees
High	$1.8M federal funds	6.1 grantees

Eliminating those states that are anomalies because their state funding level dwarfs their state-administered federal funds, or because they clearly have relatively small staffs dedicated to the administration of the federal transit funds (i.e., Pennsylvania, Colorado, Washington, and Massachusetts), presents a more consistent pattern:

Low	$1.4M federal funds	11.8 grantees
Medium	$1.7M federal funds	7.3 grantees
High	$2.0M federal funds	6.7 grantees

In general, in states administering higher levels of federal transit dollars, each grantee is receiving a higher level of funding. This means that in these states, each staff person is managing more federal dollars, but has fewer grantees to deal with. This circumstance indicates that it is not sufficient to estimate staff requirements based on funding alone; the number of grantees should also be considered. Because FTA/federal allowances for state administrative drawdowns are set as a percentage of the federal funds, not the number of grantees, states with fewer federal dollars and a large number of small grantees could have difficulty. The New Freedom and JARC programs, with their nontraditional grantees, are examples of cases that involve relatively small grant amounts requiring relatively high maintenance. This problem of relatively small grants requiring relatively high maintenance could be influencing recent state efforts to encourage regionalization of transit services, as regionalization would result in fewer grantees to administer.

Changes in Staff Responsibilities

Two interesting trends in the functions of the staffs are the following: (1) creating new positions

Table 7 Relationship of staff to federal funding levels and number of grantees

State	Scale of the State Transit Program					Staffing Ratios		
	Total Transit Staff	Staff Involved in FTA	State-Administered Federal Funds	State Funds	Number of Grantees*	Federal Funds/Total Staff	Grantees/ Total Staff	Federal Funding per Grantee
Low Federal Funding Levels								
Alaska	2.2	2.2	2,790,060	59,850,000	50	1,268,209	22.7	55,801
Hawaii	1.5	1.5	3,514,141	0	19	2,342,761	12.7	184,955
Nevada	6	6	4,465,547	95,000	63	744,258	10.5	70,882
South Dakota	2.1	2.1	5,469,407	1,891,229	30	2,604,480	14.3	182,314
New Hampshire	4.5	4.5	7,063,439	225,000	19	1,569,653	4.2	371,760
Oregon	13	13	8,156,995	26,140,529		627,461		
Arizona	13	13	8,683,102	20,068,000	81	667,931	6.2	107,199
Average	*6.0*	*6.0*	*5,734,670*	*15,467,108*	*44*	*1,403,536*	*11.8*	*162,152*
Medium Federal Funding Levels								
Utah	5	5	9,260,932	0	47	1,852,186	9.4	197,041
Idaho	9	9	9,658,339	312,000	25	1,073,149	2.8	386,334
Maine	4	4	10,475,453	1,555,000	22	2,618,863	5.5	476,157
Minnesota	25	12	11,601,650	254,527,000	100	464,066	4.0	116,017
New Jersey			12,492,085	910,584,000	60			208,201
West Virginia	7	7	15,583,120	2,258,342	50	2,226,160	7.1	311,662
Virginia	13	9	16,476,882	115,300,000	62	1,267,452	4.8	265,756
Alabama	9	9	16,690,041	0	88	1,854,449	9.8	189,660
Maryland	8	8	17,570,656	491,425,000	47	2,196,332	5.9	373,844
Indiana	6	6	18,431,271	37,046,940	80	3,071,879	13.3	230,391
Colorado	3	3	18,533,545	0	65	6,177,848	21.7	285,131
Georgia	12	12	19,127,355	8,222,757	123	1,593,946	10.3	155,507
Connecticut	24	19	19,237,237	206,440,541		801,552		
Average	*10.4*	*8.6*	*15,010,659*	*155,974,737*	*64*	*2,099,824*	*8.6*	*266,308*

High Federal Funding Levels								
Massachusetts**	17	10	8,045,891	1,197,137,541	30	473,288	1.8	268,196
Washington	24	8	19,897,170	30,423,000	150	829,049	6.3	132,648
Oklahoma	6	6	22,305,626	3,250,000	35	3,717,604	5.8	637,304
New York	33	32	23,663,012	2,169,005,000	140	717,061	4.2	169,022
Illinois	24	20	24,420,110	445,600,000	100	1,017,505	4.2	244,201
Missouri	7	7	26,152,961	6,600,000	119	3,736,137	17.0	219,773
Pennsylvania	23	6	27,220,961	835,223,000	90	1,183,520	3.9	302,455
Michigan	28	28	27,355,948	195,149,300	130	976,998	4.6	210,430
Ohio	13	13	29,754,574	18,300,000	61	2,288,813	4.7	487,780
North Carolina	31	29	30,346,840	111,724,897	83	978,930	2.7	365,625
Florida	21	21	32,946,579	149,738,231	165	1,568,885	7.9	199,676
Wisconsin	8	8	40,583,005	109,438,341	140	5,072,876	17.5	289,879
Texas	39	39	55,476,213	29,741,067	95	1,422,467	2.4	583,960
California	95	34	70,021,469	1,400,000,000	250	737,068	2.6	280,086
Average	*26.4*	*18.6*	*31,299,311*	*478,666,456*	*113*	*1,765,729*	*6.1*	*313,645*
Average	***16***	***12***	***19,807,989***	***259,919,756***	***82***	***1,810,389***	***8***	***267,489***

*The total number of grantees (eliminating duplication for agencies receiving grants under various programs) was estimated based on survey responses and national databases.
**In Massachusetts, 3 staff members dedicated to rail oversight not included. Also, Massachusetts was included in the "high" category due to extraordinary state funding levels.

for the administrative part of grants management—data collection and reporting, managing grant agreements, etc.; and (2) creating a new position to manage coordination efforts, as opposed to adding the management of coordination efforts to the S.5310 program manager duties.

RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

Research conclusions on state staff resources for administration of federal public transit programs are presented in three main sections and cover the following:

- Adequacy of staff levels,
- Ability to hire staff, and
- Ability to retain and recruit staff.

Adequacy of Staff Levels

The research indicates that most states do not have the staff resources necessary to adequately manage the federal transit programs. This conclusion is drawn from a number of sources, as outlined below.

States indicated that they do not currently have enough staff. Only 8 (24%) of the survey respondents said that they have enough staff to adequately administer the current federal programs; this suggests that current staffing levels are inadequate and should not be used to estimate staffing needs. While the variations among the states in how they manage federal funds, differences in state programs, and differences in FTA regional office expectations and interpretations make it hard to identify the number of state staff needed to administer FTA funds, it is clear that state transit staff levels are too low. Many states report that staff members are working overtime, nights, and weekends.

State staff levels have not kept up with increased workloads and responsibilities. It is clear that as state responsibilities have increased, the staffing levels have not kept up. Figure 2 shows the staffing levels from 2000 through 2006 for the 29 states responding to that question on the survey (as well as

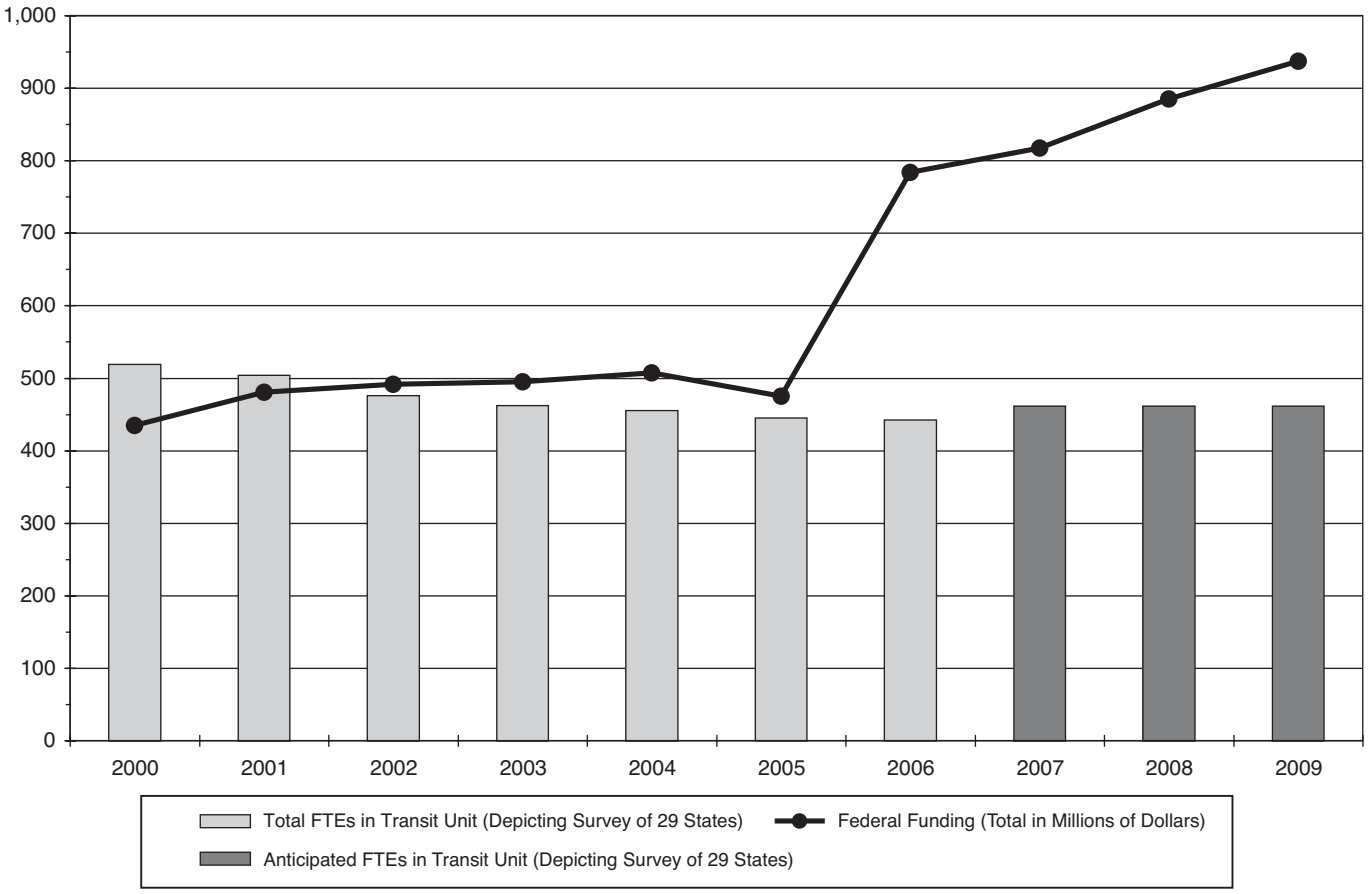

Figure 2 State staffing levels, FTEs in transit units (based on 29 surveyed states).

anticipated FTEs for 2007 through 2009) superimposed over the federal funding levels for state-administered programs. As the number and value of the federal programs have increased dramatically, and as the number of core functions expected of the state agencies and the number of state programs have been expanding, the number of state staff members has decreased or remained constant, at least for the states responding to the survey.

Definition of "Adequate" Varies. The definition of what is adequate is somewhat elusive. It is unclear why particular states said that their staff level is adequate; there is no evident pattern (e.g., geography/region, size of the program, use of district staff, or organizational structure) suggesting an explanation. A positive response to this question may have more to do with the personality of the transit manager or the history of the state program. On the basis of discussions with the state DOTs, it appears that managers' sense that they are doing an adequate job may depend somewhat on whether the state has had an FTA State Management Review and what the findings were of that review; an FTA finding that they are not monitoring their subgrantees adequately seemed to particularly affect managers' sense of adequacy. As reported, subgrantee monitoring and compliance reviews tend to be areas that take a considerable amount of staff time.

FTA Expectations Vary by Region. As described above, the wide variations among the states in the number of staff involved in administering the federal grants and the variations in the level of effort involved may be explained by differences in FTA regional office interpretations of the level of effort required at the state level. It is clear that some states do less oversight on the federal program subgrantees than others. For example, in one state with over 100 active S.5310 grantees, rather than doing field inspections, they request monthly maintenance reports and do on-site monitoring only "by exception." This contrasts with another state that conducts full compliance reviews annually on all S.5310 grantees, including an inspection of all S.5310 vehicles by DOT transit staff.

Impact of SAFETEA-LU. Only 2 of the states responding (6%) report that they will have an adequate number of staff members to administer the federal programs as they are structured under SAFETEA-LU. States report that the new SAFETEA-LU regulations will have a major impact primarily because of new programs that have large numbers of potential applicants (wide eligibility). It appears that the impact of new SAFETEA-LU regulations may depend on whether a state anticipates being involved in meeting the coordinated planning requirements for New Freedom, JARC, and S.5310.

Tight Staffing Levels Have a Negative Effect on the Program. States report they are not managing the programs as effectively as they would like to be and that program management decisions are based on time availability instead of advancing a preferred outcome. State program managers often report that all they have time to do is respond to the FTA regional office, focusing their attention on monitoring rather than program management. Yet, many monitoring tasks are left undone, and states report that they do not do enough on-site contract management/oversight of subgrantees.

Tasks the states think that they should be doing but are currently unable to do include the following:

- Assisting local communities with planning/service design;
- Visiting sites for field observations, being visible in the local communities, attending meetings pertaining to local transit services;
- Providing technical assistance to subgrantees;
- Providing training to grant recipients; and
- Working on statewide initiatives on issues such as statewide IT, coordination, and marketing information.

Tasks that states are doing that they regard as unnecessary are often the result of their perception that the FTA State Management Review has put the onus on the state to micromanage local subrecipients. Specific comments included concerns about the following:

- Continuously increasing oversight and monitoring as well as administrative and data requirements with diminishing returns,
- Micromanaging disadvantaged business enterprise (DBE) (creating a significant workload), and
- Excessive reporting (including the quarterly reporting of S. 5309 data, Buy America Certification, and possibly the new DBE requirements).

Hiring Challenges Facing State DOTs

One key research finding is that staff levels are constrained in most states and the ability to add staff, or even hire to fill vacancies, is limited. This is likely to continue even with the availability of additional federal funds.

State options for hiring staff are constrained. Many states are under hiring freezes and are unable to hire additional staff even with additional federal funds. In many states, increasing the number of staff members requires legislative approval through the budget process or appropriating a position from somewhere else in the DOT. This conclusion is supported in the survey:

- Only 9% (3 of 34) of survey respondents reported that they could hire to expand with no limits.
- Three additional states indicated that they can hire staff to expand if additional federal funds are available to cover salaries.
- Half of the respondents (17 of 34) indicated that they are able to replace an existing staff position; all indicated that they have the federal funds to cover the salary. However, while filling vacancies is easier than expanding, it often still requires approval at the level of the Secretary of Transportation.
- Many states have a hard time replacing staff members when they leave regardless of funding availability. Almost one-third of the states (11 of 34) indicated that they cannot hire at all, even to fill vacancies.

Ability to hire often is based on policy or politics. Many states indicate that staffing decisions often are political budgetary issues and that additional FTA administrative support has little effect on their ability to hire new staff. Some states report that they have long-standing "no expansion" policies from the governor's office or a DOT departmental policy not to request new positions. Some states indicated that hiring issues are directly related to how the transit program is funded on the state level. For example, in some states, gas-tax revenue can be used only for highway purposes and state funding for transit has to come from the state's general revenue. Because increasing staff salaries paid out of the general revenue fund is more difficult politically, a DOT's transit programs often find it harder to increase staff levels than the highway programs do.

Most states can hire contract/temporary employees if they have the funds. Many states are able to meet some staffing needs by hiring temporary or contract employees. Generally, temporary staff positions are only for a set, limited amount of time.

States are using consultants for grant program management. States are also outsourcing some grant management activities to consultants. Some states even fill on-site staff positions (FTEs) through consulting contracts; states report hiring as many as three FTEs through contractors. Other states outsource particular functions, most notably their RTAP programs, compliance reviews/monitoring (drug/alcohol), vehicle procurement, safety/security, technical assistance, planning, and specific training courses. The relative advantages and disadvantages of using contractors to perform grant management are listed below. Advantages are the following:

- Provides the transit section flexibility as to the number of staff members and intensity of focus necessary for different functions,
- Can accelerate the process of bringing staff on board to get the task started (depending on the contract size),
- Can be easier to release an unproductive person,
- Requires only a short-term commitment,
- Frees state staff for other core responsibilities,
- Can preclude the need for training (no need to train the consultant), and
- Can provide access to skills and abilities that are not available in the state staff.

Disadvantages are the following:

- Can be more expensive,
- Can result in less state staff contact with grantees,
- Can add an additional layer between state staff and grantees, and
- Can contribute to loss of in-house areas of expertise/skills.

Ability to Retain and Recruit Staff

Although few states report problems with staff turnover, state DOTs do have difficulty attracting qualified personnel to transit positions and may be headed for a crisis as staff members retire.

Some problems with turnover or retention. Few states report that they have a problem with staff turnover. However, states report that staff members generally leave only to retire, and state DOTs are concerned that a large number of staff members will be eligible to retire in the near future (1 to 2 years), particularly senior staff. Other than retiring, staff members leave state transit programs for the following reasons:

- To make more money. (The job is low paying, hard to do, and requires highly skilled individuals. One state reported that they are not

allowed to pay more than 10% above the starting pay, even if they have a highly experienced candidate.)
- To work at local transit systems, elsewhere in the DOT, or for consulting firms for more money.
- To avoid the increased workload. (As new programs are added, the staffing level is remaining the same, and therefore staff members have to take on more than they can do.)

States have difficulty recruiting staff. States report that they have difficulty recruiting new employees and have particular problems finding transit planners, people with transit experience, or people with knowledge of FTA programs. These problems seem to stem from the following:

- Pay levels are low and the job is demanding,
- Local transit systems and consulting firms pay better than the state,
- Some state transit units are not allowed to go outside the DOT to hire (even though transit experience is not available within the DOT),
- In some states, people do not want to work in the state capitals, and
- There is very little opportunity for upward mobility within the department. Because state staff levels are not expanding, lower-level employees have no possibility for advancement unless senior-level people leave/retire.

ONGOING PROCESS FOR UPDATING THE DATA

One of the tasks of this project was to recommend a method by which the data (or a portion of the data) could be collected and updated periodically (annually or biannually). On the basis of the initial data collection effort, the project team suggests that a web-based database be established with a limited number of variables. Suggestions concerning this web-based database include the following:

- The database could reside on the AASHTO website as part of the SCOPT.
- Once a year, members of SCOPT could be sent an e-mail requesting that they update information for their state on the database. Alternatively, the data could be updated every 2 years, perhaps at the beginning, middle, and end of the reauthorization cycle. Using a password, states would be allowed to view their information from the previous year and update as needed.
- AASHTO/SCOPT could collect data electronically on a *limited number* of data items, including the following:
  - Number of transit staff (total staff members and those involved in the federal grant program management),
  - Plans to add or eliminate staff positions,
  - Number of grantees (by program and total),
  - Funding levels (federal and state),
  - Major events/initiatives that have materially affected the transit program, budget, and staffing (e.g., employee buy-outs, new state funding, or a new hiring freeze),
  - Opinions on adequacy of staffing levels,
  - Current or continuing hiring/recruitment issues, and
  - Current or continuing retention issues.

On the basis of the updated data, SCOPT could generate a brief annual report composed of a series of tables showing the data and a few key ratios (e.g., federal funds per staff person and grantees per staff person).

These digests are issued in order to increase awareness of research results emanating from projects in the Cooperative Research Programs (CRP). Persons wanting to pursue the project subject matter in greater depth should contact the CRP Staff, Transportation Research Board of the National Academies, 500 Fifth Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001.

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