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**Federal Transit
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REGION 10 BULLETIN NO: 07-28

SUBJECT: New and Small Starts Travel-Forecasting Workshop

PROGRAM AREAS: New Starts

DATE: June 27, 2007

In June 2006, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) sponsored a workshop in Minneapolis on travel forecasting for New Starts projects that was attended by approximately 70 travel-forecasting specialists. The workshop was largely a review of FTA's efforts over the previous three years to improve the quality of travel forecasts developed in support of proposed New Starts projects. The topics included a description of FTA's increased scrutiny of forecasts, efforts to use the forecasts to understand project benefits, conclusions about models and forecasts derived from stepped-up quality control efforts, results from several research efforts, and plans for policy changes and guidance.

Based on comments at the workshop and over the past year, the workshop was well received as a means of highlighting FTA concerns on specific difficulties, identifying intended changes to technical requirements, and obtaining comments from travel forecasters participating in New Starts planning and project development.

Since then, FTA has issued policy guidance that implemented several of the ideas discussed at the workshop and has maintained the increased level of scrutiny on New Starts forecasts. More importantly, travel forecasters around the country have increased their own efforts to improve the quality of travel models and the usefulness of travel forecasts for proposed major transit projects.

Given all of these ongoing activities, it seems to us that another get-together on travel forecasting would be very useful to the travel forecasting community and to FTA. **FTA has reserved conference space and a block of rooms at the Adams Mark Hotel in downtown St. Louis, Missouri for a workshop on Wednesday and Thursday, September 19 and 20.** Online registration is available at <http://www.regonline.com/125378>. As last year, we anticipate a full agenda that will begin at 9:00am on Wednesday and conclude at 3:00pm on Thursday.

An important change we would like to make in the approach to this next workshop is to involve participants directly in the presentations. So we hope to limit the time given to FTA presentations and devote a significant part of the workshop to active participation by non-FTA attendees. Participation might include presentations or membership on discussion panels. We also want to ensure that the workshop addresses the topics that are of highest interest. Therefore, we are asking for two things: that you identify for us the travel forecasting topics of greatest interest to

Bulletin – New and Small Starts Travel-Forecasting Workshop

you, and that you volunteer to make a presentation or participate on a discussion panel. As a starting point, we anticipate that topics will fall into several general subject areas.

- Better methods for data collection, particularly data on transit ridership patterns and the use of that data to understand important transit markets;
- Better representation within travel models of (1) transit service characteristics and (2) transit rider responses to transit services including path-choice and mode-choice effects;
- More useful calibration and validation of models, focused on their ability to understand and predict current transit ridership patterns;
- Adaptations of travel models and/or forecasting approaches to deal with transit modes (rail, BRT) and rider characteristics (choice riders, park/ride access) that would be new to a metropolitan area;
- More effective quality control tests of forecasts;
- Successful efforts to identify the travel markets benefiting from a proposed project, determine the specific causes of those benefits, and presentation of those insights to decision-makers and the public;
- Attempts to characterize uncertainties in forecasts and suggest a range of possible ridership outcomes;
- Simplified methods for small projects; and
- Any other topics related to the improved usefulness of travel forecasts in the planning and evaluation of proposed New Starts projects.

Please contact Ken Cervenka, our headquarters coordinator at Kenneth.Cervenka@dot.gov to identify specific topics of interest, propose your participation as a presenter or discussant on a selected topic, or to suggest other ideas for the workshop.

As we did last year, FTA will distribute reading materials in advance of the workshop so that participants can come to the workshop prepared to discuss the issues.

Please note that this workshop is intended for technical staffs that specialize in the development of travel models and the preparation of travel forecasts. The discussions will be focused on technical issues, emerging methods, and detailed procedures for quality control. Project managers and planning staff from sponsoring agencies, metropolitan planning agencies, and consulting firms should attend other New Starts outreach sessions – including the one-day workshops on the New Starts program and the three-day course on alternatives analysis.

Please contact our regional coordinator, John Witmer at 206-220-7964 or email john.whitmer@dot.gov if you have any questions concerning this bulletin.

Sincerely,



R.F. Krochalis
Regional Administrator

