

**RESEARCH PROBLEM STATEMENT**

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| <b>DATE:</b> 09/25/2020 | <b>PROJECT AREA:</b> Planning |
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**TITLE:** Quantifying the Social and Economic Sustainability Benefits of Public Transportation

**PROBLEM STATEMENT:**

Transit systems provide critical services that help shape and connect communities. Transit agencies regularly use different traditional performance measures of service (e.g., annual ridership, service coverage, hours of service, etc.). These traditional service measures are now often supplemented with measures that focus on social, economic, and environmental outcomes. Transit agency efforts to quantify these benefits have focused primarily on environmental sustainability. Improving transit systems' performance and integrating transit with community development is more vital to sustainability than simply reducing agency operations and facilities' environmental footprint. This is especially true for an agency like ARDOT that provides public transportation services to rural areas where it is literally a lifeline to many state's populations. However, social and economic sustainability is more challenging to quantify; therefore, this area of responsibility often is largely ignored and under-managed. In this regard, this study aims to quantify the social and economic sustainability benefits of Arkansas's public transportation services.

**OBJECTIVES:**

The objectives of this study are to: 1) develop social and economic performance measures for public transit services, 2) quantify the social and economic sustainability benefits of public transportation services based on the identified measures. Tasks include: i) review literature, ii) conduct interviews with representatives from 17 Arkansas transit agencies as well as with representatives from urban/rural areas outside of Arkansas to understand the current practices related to public transportation performance measures, iii) performance measure identification and evaluation, iv) data collection, v) operationalize the performance measures for Arkansas transit agencies, 6) organize workshop for all 17 transit agencies.

**FORM OF RESEARCH IMPLEMENTATION AND RETURN ON INVESTMENT:**

The project will produce a report with guidance on how to set goals, determine objectives, establish measures, implement and evaluate the measures, and report progress on social and economic sustainability. The report will be presented with a companion Excel workbook that can be used by all seventeen transit agencies of Arkansas to quantify their social and economic sustainability performance measures as well as other transit service performance measures. The outcome of this study can be an effective tool for increasing confidence in the transit agency, and it can be used to make the case for additional funding.

**Estimated Project Duration:** 24 Months

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Standing Subcommittee  
Ranking

6/7

Advisory Council  
Ranking

27

Statement Combined with  
Statement Number(s)