

HANDBOOK OF AUTOMATED DATA COLLECTION METHODS FOR THE NATIONAL TRANSIT DATABASE

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In recent years, with the increasing sophistication and capabilities of information processing technologies, there has been a renewed interest on the part of transit systems to tap the rich information potential of the NTD for the purpose of improving transit operations. Because the NTD contains the only standardized collection of performance data for urban transit providers in the nation, it has become an important transit evaluation tool. In many cases, however, there have been concerns about the accuracy of the NTD information, even after final Federal Transit Administration (FTA) validation. Many of the errors found in the NTD are often related to data collection problems experienced by transit agencies, and many of these agencies have expressed difficulties in collecting some elements of the NTD data. Hence, they are requesting help with collecting data from the correct sources, ease of obtaining the NTD data, determining operational procedure guidelines to collect data more efficiently, and gathering data from their contractors.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of this project was to investigate examples of automated methods available for collecting and compiling NTD data. In the course of this study, CUTR conducted interviews with Florida transit agencies to understand existing methods of collecting data and current issues/problems faced in doing so. In addition, CUTR conducted research on available automated methods that have the capability to increase ease of data collection and accuracy. The results of the transit agency interviews and research on available technologies provide a focus for the illustrative examples shown in the developed handbook.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Based on interviews with transit agencies, the areas of the NTD with which the agencies are having the greatest difficulty are determining service area population and service area size, getting appropriate and timely information from subcontractors, and estimating passenger miles. The developed handbook provides an overall understanding of some of the automated methods available for collecting the data for the required federal NTD reporting. In addition to outlining the ways that various technologies, often implemented for reasons other than data collection, can indeed be used for compiling NTD information, the handbook provides examples of simple spreadsheets that can be used by agencies of all sizes for collecting and compiling data for the NTD.

BENEFITS

This handbook will be useful for those agencies wishing to learn more about how various transit technologies can assist with the required federal NTD reporting. Transit agencies are often concerned with the time and effort put into NTD reporting. The methodologies outlined in this handbook, including the spreadsheets, will help agencies to more efficiently collect and compile accurate NTD data. This handbook will allow users to obtain further information, catered to their specific needs, prior to acquiring any hardware or software discussed in this document.

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