

Expanding the Use of RTAP Demographic Information

By Janellys Long

Introduction

Each year the University of Kansas Transportation Center compiles and posts demographic information for the state of Kansas. RTAP's demographic report summarizes the following information at the county level for the state of Kansas: total population, characteristics of the elderly population, characteristics of the population with disabilities, characteristics of low-income populations and access to vehicles in households. Also, it includes population projections for the following year.

This article describes the benefits that transit managers can gain through a better understanding of the demographics and alternative applications of the information.

Use in Grant Applications

The demographic information is primarily used by Federal Transit Administration (FTA) section 5311 and 5310 grant applicants to KDOT for submitting annual applications for federal funding. Portions of the grant applications require an area's demographics. The data are used to demonstrate that the service being provided best meets the needs of the area's populations. For instance, the Service Provisions section of the KDOT application requests estimated numbers of clients by racial group to ensure the needs of any vulnerable populations are being addressed. This is why it is important to understand the service area's demographic information.

Potential Alternative Uses

The RTAP demographic information has the potential to be used by transit agencies for transit planning. Cory Davis, Assistant Bureau Chief, KDOT Bureau of Transportation Planning, provided insight on this topic. He said he believed transit agencies are using the demographic information to fulfill a requirement rather than to identify gaps in service. Because of this, he said, it would be advantageous for transit agencies to have access to trainings on the various ways demographic information can be used outside of federal funding applications.

For example, the demographic information can be used as a reference to create ArcGIS maps that provide a visual representation of an area's population, to help identify patterns and trends in transit usage.

In response, Kansas RTAP will develop a webinar training early next year to demonstrate how the demographic data can be used further, for transit service planning purposes. Look for a notice in a future *TransitReporter*.

Davis also suggested that each Coordinated Transit District (CTD) have a mobility manager to help with the regional use of demographic information for regional transit planning. Transit agencies with stagnant service could benefit from this proposal. Someone new, looking at demographics, might have a new perspective on services that may have been consistent for many years and have not evolved with the movement of specific populations such as elderly, disabled, and low-income people.

Conclusion

Although the primary use of RTAP's demographic information currently is limited to federal funding applications, there is potential to use the information for planning purposes. The exploration of these options can help transit agencies increase the efficiency of the service they provide.

Interview with Cory Davis, Kansas Department of Transportation, December 20, 2018

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