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RSG to Study Characteristics of Premium Transit Services Affecting Mode Choice

(RSG Inc., White River Junction, VT)—Resource Systems Group Inc. (RSG) has been awarded a \$300,000 contract by the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) to conduct research that will describe the most important factors that differentiate premium transit services from ordinary bus services, and quantify, for practical use, the magnitude of these distinguishing features within the demand forecasting modeling process.

From February 2008 to December 2009, the RSG research team will carry out this ambitious study in three phases. In the initial research phase, the team will identify (1) distinguishing features of premium transit services, (2) the factors that influence mode choice decisions, and (3) advanced methods to model mode choice.

The goals of phase 2, data collection and analysis, is to understand (1) the extent to which transit alternatives (premium and non-premium) are known, understood and considered as an option; (2) the relative importance of different levels of comfort, convenience, safety and other “nontraditional” transit attributes in mode choice decisions; and (3) how different market segments respond to these attributes.

Finally, the research team will advise FTA and practitioners as to data collection and mode choice model specifications and parameters so that premium transit services can be better distinguished and transit forecasts, in turn, can be refined. This will help the FTA better understand the benefits of different project alternatives so it can prioritize projects and properly allocate funding to worthy projects that will be successful and effective.

The goal of the project is to specify as many of the mode-specific constants as possible and to “demystify” the constant itself so that the factors that drive mode choice are more explicit than they currently are in most models where large mode constants can dwarf the behavioral variables. When the project ends, the National Academies, TCRP’s parent agency, hopes that a successful research effort will both improve the transit industry’s understanding of mode choice determinants and offer practical insights into the forecasting community so that mode choice models and transit path-builders can better represent and distinguish important mode characteristics.

For more than 20 years, RSG has provided insightful consulting services for the planning, analysis and management of transportation, natural resources, technology and business. Since its founding in 1986, the firm has offered high-quality, objective data analysis to serve a broad portfolio of public and private sector clients locally, regionally and nationally. With headquarters in White River Junction, VT, RSG has offices in Burlington (VT), Chicago, New York and Salt Lake City.

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