



Florida Department of Transportation Research

Quantifying the Benefits of the Florida Transit Research Inspection Procurement Services (TRIPS) Program

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Established in 1995 as the Florida Vehicle Procurement Program (FVPP), Florida Transit Research Inspection Procurement Services (TRIPS) is a vehicle sourcing and procurement system for Florida's public transit agencies that integrates inspection, procurement, and research. TRIPS helps to assure the best balance of specification, quality, and cost. It is administered by the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) at the University of South Florida (USF) under an agreement with Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). In this study, researchers from CUTR explored means of quantifying the benefits and costs of TRIPS.

In the first phase, CUTR researchers examined data sources to determine the adequacy of the data to address benefits/costs. In the second phase, they conducted a comparative assessment of TRIPS against the practices of other states.

In 1999, CUTR established the cost effectiveness of TRIPS purchasing. In this project, FDOT wanted a view of the full range of benefits related to vehicle purchase and maintenance on a life-cycle basis to uncover long-term economic advantages associated with agency administration, regulatory compliance, warranty monitoring, and vehicle inspection.

The first data source examined was the TRIPS database. Maintained by CUTR, it stores information about vehicles purchased under TRIPS, from issuance of a purchase order, through manufacturing, delivery, and service. At the front end of the process, where fewer individuals are involved and administrative processes are better defined, data were more complete. But during the service life of the vehicle, data entry depends on so many more individuals, and there were gaps, especially in mileage and maintenance issues.

To develop other data, the researchers surveyed 211 Florida public transit agencies. The response rate was low, and the data were minimal,



Many vehicles in public transit service have been purchased through a centralized system of procurement and inspection that saves agency dollars and assures higher quality.

reflecting data collection at the local level. Data were also sought from FDOT district maintenance records. These records were only intended to document maintenance schedules and did not contain data relevant to TRIPS benefits.

In the second phase of the project, the researchers evaluated practices in other states to collect evidence that could provide insight into TRIPS. Among other key findings from the extensive review, comparison showed that vehicles administered under TRIPS tended to have longer service life, possibly due to a second level of safety inspection required in Florida. TRIPS also showed advantages by assuring higher quality in the procurement process, such as requiring dealers to provide an orientation to local vehicle recipients.

It is clear that TRIPS has resulted in cash savings for the state and local agencies, and the program has provided Florida's public transit agencies with a quality fleet at the same time. A broader view of its impact will require better data collection instruments and greater consistency in data entry.

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For more information, visit <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/research-center>