Support from state legislatures and transportation departments and the availability of a regular source of federal or other funding are critical to the establishment and sustained growth of mobility management networks. Those are among conclusions presented in “Mobility Management: State of the States Report,” the first phase of a study completed in March by the Urban Transportation Center.

The focus of the study was to learn more about the scope of mobility management networks, defined as the process “to improve the overall mobility for any given trip, regardless of the rider characteristics, mode or geography.” Findings were based on the results of an online survey sent to 49 state departments of transportation. A total of 21 surveys were completed. Some respondents noted that it would be beneficial to share news on successful mobility management networks in order to build greater awareness with other states and agencies. A second phase of the study was undertaken to learn through telephone interviews more insight on states that built a statewide mobility management program.

The study was prepared by UTC Director Dr. P.S. Sriraj, Senior Associate Lise Dirks and research assistants Em Hall and Michael McCarthy. Funding was provided by the National Center for Mobility Management, a technical assistance center funded through the Federal Transit Administration. Learn more from an abstract or download the report. Phase II of the study will be released this summer.

UTC Names Four 2018 Krambles Awards Recipients

Two doctoral candidates, a master’s candidate and an undergraduate student were awarded scholarships for participating in the 2018 George Krambles Transportation Scholarship Awards managed by the Urban Transportation Center. Now in its 13th year of management by the UTC, the Krambles Awards was established to honor the accomplishments of a legendary Chicago public transit leader. Recipients for 2018 represent three UIC colleges.

Sudheer Ballare. A PhD candidate in the College of Engineering, Sudheer is in his final year of research and is studying solutions to urban logistics problems. He also works as a research assistant at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Ann Arbor, Michigan office.

Emma Chapman. Prior to attending UIC to pursue a master’s of business administration degree in the College of Business Administration, Emma held full-time positions with the Chicago Transit Authority and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

Anthony Misiak. Anthony, who is pursuing a bachelors degree in Urban Studies from the College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs, has completed successful internships with Metra and the Village of Schiller Park.

Ali Shamshiripour. One of Ali’s long-term goals in life is to contribute to society through effective transportation engineering. He currently is pursuing a doctoral degree through the College of Engineering and is president of the Institute of Transportation Engineers UIC Chapter.
UTC and CUPPA Alumni Reception at TRB 2019 Draws More than 65 Guests

Transportation scholars and professionals joined UIC alumni, Urban Transportation Center faculty researchers and staff and University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) affiliated faculty colleagues at the UTC and CUPPA Alumni Association Reception January 14 during the 2019 Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C.

The reception, which drew more than 65 participants, was held at Penn Commons restaurant near the Washington Convention Center. The UIC College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs provided generous sponsorship. UTC Director Dr. P.S. Sriraj welcomed guests and recognized staff, affiliated faculty researchers, and graduate research assistants for their contributions. Highlights for 2018 include:

- Research projects underway and scheduled for 2019 include studies involving mobility management, IDOT’s organizational structure and potential for economic development, rail grade crossing safety, transit resiliency and mitigating the last mile.
- Five presentations were delivered in 2018 through the UTC Seminar Series. Featured speakers from the RTA, MPC, CMAP, Metra and Pace addressed transit funding, mobility, transportation equity and bus rapid transit.
- The UTC hosted a special presentation to the Chinese Ministry of Information and Technology and co-sponsored a Smart Transportation Seminar with the German American Chamber of Commerce.

The always-popular reception drew a wide spectrum of transportation scholars, professionals and CUPPA alumni.

Research Assistant Em Hall Recipient of Eisenhower Transportation Fellowship

On behalf of the UTC and College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs (CUPPA), we’re proud to announce that second year PhD candidate Em Hall was awarded a prestigious Dwight David Eisenhower Transportation Fellowship from the U.S. Department of Transportation. These awards are merit-based and given to a select group of leading PhD candidates and graduate students across the country each year.

A research assistant at the UTC, Em received $5,000 in funding toward her research into the role of nonprofits organizations in public-private partnerships (P3s) designed to improve transportation. She was one of 17 recipients invited to present their research at the 2019 Transportation Research Board (TRB) Annual Meeting, where she participated in the Innovative Doctoral Transportation Research Showcase panel.

“The Eisenhower Fellowship provides me with a tremendous opportunity to advance key aspects of my dissertation research,” Em said. “It was an honor to attend TRB and present my work in front of a diverse group of transportation colleagues. It’s also invigorating to witness and be a part of a new body of scholarship that will help shape the direction of transportation for years to come.”

Currently, Em is working on the “Planning Structure Research” project funded by the Illinois Department of Transportation. Among the goals of the research is to learn more about the ways state DOTs are organized to support project planning.
As 2019 unfolded, UTC Director Dr. P.S. Sriraj participated as an expert resource for three major transportation-focused news stories taking place in and around Chicago. Here’s a recap.

Byrne Circle Interchange. In a March 5 investigative report, the Chicago Tribune cited factors behind the delay in completing the massive Jane Byrne Interchange project. One factor noted by the Illinois Department Transportation was the closing of CUPPA Hall in 2015 to repair structural damage. For an additional perspective, the investigative team sought insight from Dr. Sriraj, who commented on the scope of projects like the Byrne Interchange.

O’Hare Express Service. Will Chicago’s next mayor approve the proposed express service that would operate from O’Hare International Airport to the Loop? Dr. Sriraj offered comments in a February 28 Reader article.

State of Infrastructure. Following news in February of a crack to a support beam on a Lake Shore Drive bridge, Dr. Sriraj spoke to with broadcast and print news sources on the state of infrastructure in Chicago and nationwide: CBS Channel 2 News for an Investigators report; the Chicago Tribune for a news story; an updated report from Channel 2; a report that aired on the WTTW “Chicago Tonight” program; a Chicago Tribune editorial; inclusion in a Tribune Spin news roundup. And, industry publication Paint Square referenced the Tribune report in a March 5 post.

Alumni Update: Emily Navarette, MUPP and Lucy Chen, MUPP

A key element of the UTC’s vision is to “offer an immersive, transformative education based on real-world problems and practical student experience.” Student researchers who support faculty and staff researchers gain experience that helps prepare them for careers in transportation. Two former graduate research assistants now working in the industry shared insight into their careers and experience at the UTC. Here are short perspectives in their own words.

Emily Navarette, MUPP, Community Planner, the Volpe Transportation Center.

I support multiple Federal agencies including Federal Highway Administration and National Parks Service by providing transportation planning services. This includes researching, coordinating and writing reports and project management and communication support. As an RA at the UTC, I gained experience in preparing and producing high quality transportation research reports which helped me kick start my career at Volpe doing similar tasks. The social network at UTC also exposed me to others in my field with similar aspirations and interests. My vision on the immediate future of transportation is a more data driven and technological approach to solving transportation problems with smart and creative strategies to improve conditions on existing infrastructure.

Lucy Chen, MUPP, Junior Transportation Planner, HNTB Corporation.

HNTB works with clients across the United States from various departments of transportation, as well as transit agencies, and municipalities. Our work includes preparing federal grant applications, project funding studies, and various feasibility studies and scenario modeling. My work at the UTC during graduate school at CUPPA not only helped me grow my professional network, but the experience also cultivated my communication, organization, and technical writing skills.
Gather transportation scholars, professionals and students together in one room and one thing is for certain: There’s bound to be some engaging and spirited conversation.

As noted in the photo below, that’s what took place January 14 at the UTC and CUPPA Alumni Association reception held during the 2019 Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting in Washington. The UTC was honored to again host this always well-attended and well-received evening event held at the start of the nation’s largest and most prestigious gathering within the transportation industry. Very special thanks to the College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs for generously sponsoring the reception.

One highlight during TRB 2019 was a presentation delivered by Em Hall, a second-year PhD candidate and researcher here at the UTC. We are proud to point out that Em was a 2019 recipient of the very prestigious Dwight David Eisenhower Transportation Fellowship awarded by U.S. DOT. During the presentation January 13, Em shared research that will lead to her dissertation on nonprofit organizations in public-private partnerships to guide future transportation practices and policies.

Upon our return from TRB, the UTC announced the recipients of our own long-standing and very well-regarded program, the George Krambles Transportation Scholarship Awards. Sincere congratulations to the four student scholars selected for the 2018 program. Watch for news soon on the application process for 2019.

And, it is with great pleasure that we share this news: Our great friend and colleague Dr. Siim Sõöt, UIC Professor Emeritus and UTC director from 1998 to 2000, recently announced the formation of the Sõöt Family Fund. Proceeds from the fund will be used to promote CUPPA programs and other initiatives.