Significant investment in the passenger rail network across the United States can result in economic benefits that include greater productivity, higher property values and reduced costs to other transportation modes. Furthermore, dollars spent on expanding and improving passenger rail will provide people with the ability to move around more freely and easily.

These are two key findings from a survey of transportation professionals polled for a study on the potential economic and societal gains realized through greater funding for passenger rail service.

Sixty-six professionals from the public and private sectors participated in the survey, which was conducted in 2016. Participants represented nine areas of the transportation industry – from agency leadership and operations management to consultants and economic development specialists.

The study, “Results From a Survey of Transportation Professionals Regarding the Return on Investment for Passenger Rail,” was completed by UTC Director Dr. P.S. Sriraj with assistance from former UTC research assistant Brian Tompkins and Jolene Molitoris, a former administrator for the Federal Railroad Administration. A goal of the research was to develop an integrated framework of knowledge regarding benefits gained from passenger rail investment.

Graduate Researcher Emily Navarette Earns WTS Scholarship

Graduate students who assist faculty researchers play a very significant role in the many transportation studies completed each semester by the Urban Transportation Center. After all, these talented and dedicated scholars are the future of the transportation industry.

That’s why we’re especially pleased and honored to share news that Research Assistant Emily Navarette was awarded one of six scholarships from the Greater Chicago Area WTS Chapter. Emily received the Diane Woodend Jones Leadership Legacy Scholarship during the chapter’s Scholarship Reception and Fundraiser March 9 at the Metropolitan Club in Willis Tower.

A native of Miami, Emily is enrolled in the Urban Planning and Policy master’s program within the College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs at UIC. Currently, she’s assisting faculty researchers on intercity passenger bus research and is expected to complete her studies in Fall of 2017. With chapters around the world, WTS (Women’s Transportation Seminar) is dedicated to advancing women in the transportation industry.
UTC Spring 2017 Seminar Series Presentations

In the Spring of 2017, the UTC took an alternative approach to planning the popular Seminar Series, noon-time presentations designed to broaden the dialogue on transportation, urban planning and related topics. We balanced talks on two of the largest ongoing rail-focused development programs in the world with one centering on how a leading agency rates government bonds. These short reports provide the details. Thanks to our friends and colleagues at the Great Cities Institute for use of their Conference Room at CUPPA Hall to host the Spring series. Visit the Seminar Series webpage to learn more and download presentations.

Making the Transit Investment Case: Comparing London and Chicago

Crossrail 1 is a $21 billion project to build or improve 40 rapid transit stations within greater London. The massive project will connect London’s central business district with Heathrow Airport and surrounding suburbs when completed over the next several years. At the February 16 seminar, Chris Hall, MUPP, noted that by 2021, Crossrail 1 would generate an estimated $7.7 billion in additional economic development. A consultant with Transport for London, Hall pointed out a property impact study of Crossrail 1 revealed improved travel times, merging public and private master plans, and leveraging transit real estate were among the major factors leading to projected increased economic benefits. A second component, Crossrail 2, would serve affluent suburbs and communities lacking transit, plus would help relieve congestion on existing routes and could possibly provide the needed capacity for the next generation of office development.

Making the Transit Investment Case II: Comparing Japan and the United States

The Shinkansen is a network of high-speed rail lines that connect Japan’s major cities and emerging communities across the nation. The network currently covers 2,765 kilometers (or 1,718 miles) and 688 kilometers of new rail line on the network is under construction. Susumu Kudo, PhD, a former UIC research assistant professor, informed attendees April 20 about the economic factors behind development of the Shinkansen, initially planned in 1972. A strong national government, powerful national bureaucrats and dominant big business groups comprise the political structure in Japan, he said. Collectively, this “Iron Triangle” is shaping future expansion of the Shinkansen system. Japan’s high population density — 870 people per square mile — is one key factor driving continued development of the network. In the United States, population density is much lower at 85.5 people per square mile.

How A Moody’s Analyst Rates Municipal Bonds

Government bonds are debt securities that help municipalities and states finance long-term investments, including roads, schools and infrastructure projects. On March 16, a team from Moody’s Investors Service shared insight into government bonds and the type of bonds available. Analysts David Levett and Coley Anderson cited examples of high-rated versus low-rated governments based on Moody’s analytics. Four Scorecard Factors determine a rating: Economy/tax base, finances, management and debt/pension. A committee determines future creditworthiness, which is based upon published methodologies. To illustrate how governments are rated, Levett and Anderson shared comparisons of a highly rated county with an affluent population and strong tax base to a lower-rated rural county with high unemployment and high pension payment requirements.

Susumu Kudo, PhD, discussed the Shinkansen.
More than 20 UIC researchers from colleges across campus contribute as Affiliated Faculty to the transportation research conducted by the UTC. So, we thought it would be appropriate to recognize these outstanding men and women in the Connector. In this issue, we share a profile on Dr. Kazuya Kawamura, Professor of Urban Planning and Policy in the College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs. Dr. Kawamura’s research centers on freight transportation planning, the impact of transportation on the economy, and transportation and land use.

What follows is an edited transcript of a recent conversation.

**Question:** The concentration of your research has been on freight. What’s the focus of recent research?

**Answer:** Mostly trucking and addressing logistics sprawl. The research I’m conducting with my colleague, Takanori Sakai, will address the prospect of the decentralization of warehouses in many cities, the impact that this has on society, and how to mitigate that impact.

**Question:** In 2015 you led the truck-to-rail mode shift research project. Could you please elaborate?

**Answer:** That project addressed the economic impact of a proposed shift to more deliveries by truck in order to increase efficiency. We developed a computer model that would simulate the potential impact of this change.

**Question:** In January you returned from the 2017 Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting. What issues were of special interest to you?

**Answer:** The influence of “big data” was a big topic. I learned that relying on “big data” can be good for determining performance measures, but so far it’s not been integrated into policy or planning at the level it can be. Also, at TRB there was a lot of discussion about the arrival of autonomous vehicles.

**Question:** You’re a member of the CMAP Freight Committee. What freight logistical challenges are ahead for Chicago?

**Answer:** Chicago still has to address many challenges regarding the freight infrastructure in place, one being how to maximize capacity. Through the CREATE program, we’re working to solve those problems; but we’ll need to incorporate new technology.

**Question:** Your online profile states that you like to surf. Do you still surf and have you surfed in Lake Michigan?

**Answer:** I started surfing when I lived in Japan. Along the East Coast, I’ve surfed in every state from Florida to Virginia; and along the West Coast, I’ve surfed from the Bay Area to Mexico. I still keep a surf board in my shed at home. When a seiche wave is spotted on Lake Michigan, I plan to shoot the tube.

**UTC Hosts Presentation to Visiting French Architecture Students**

Transportation challenges facing Chicago was the primary discussion topic February 17 as the UTC hosted a presentation before a group of graduate students from the National School of Architecture Paris Val de Seine. The students, who were led by instructors Marc Dilet and Evelyne Smolarski, were in Chicago as part of a studio project on urban development and the impact of transportation on surrounding properties.

**UTC Director Dr. P.S. Sriraj** shared thoughts and insight on how Chicago was addressing issues like congestion and ways to enhance mobility options.

The students were studying development potential in the South and West Loop areas; however, one recent project all were enamored with was The 606 multiuse trail that spans four North Side Chicago neighborhoods.
By Dr. P.S. Sriraj, Director

The first few months 2017 have proven to be productive, memorable and in one instance somewhat bittersweet for the faculty and staff of the Urban Transportation Center. Here are capsule reports on updates and developments.

I am happy to report that our funding from the Illinois Department of Transportation was renewed with a contract to support the Metropolitan Transportation Support Initiative (METSI), a program that provides an ongoing source of funding for research into solving a wide range of transportation challenges. The program, started in 1999, has funded recent UTC research into transportation and other services for older adults in Illinois, development of a digital tool to gauge accessibility within metropolitan Chicago, and development of a model to help reduce delays on shared rail corridors.

Collaboration with School of Public Health. In a true “east-meets-west” development, the UTC may soon be working in collaboration with researchers on the West Campus of UIC. Later in 2017, the UTC will move forward with discussions to initiate new research in collaboration with colleagues from the UIC School of Public Health Cancer Center. In early 2017, CUPPA Dean Michael Pagano and I met with researchers studying treatment of sickle cell disease. Stay tuned for details on our role in this project.

Announcement of New Manager Research Operations. The welcome mat is now out for the newest member of the UTC staff. Paola Caicedo came on board as Manager of Research Operations in late April. Paola, who also is affiliated with the CUPPA Dean’s Office, comes to the UTC from the UIC Department of Physics, where she served as Assistant to the Director of the Microphysics Laboratory.

Retirement of Silvia Becerra. The UTC and University bid farewell to a long-serving and truly wonderful colleague. Human Resources Associate Silvia Becerra, who has been employed at UIC since 1985, officially retired on April 28. Her many friends and co-workers from CUPPA held a going-away party in her honor. While at UIC, Silvia earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Spanish literature and linguistics. She will be missed for her warmth, graciousness and dedication to CUPPA and the University. That’s Silvia, center, in the image at left with me and former UTC Executive Director Steve Schlickman.