UTC Participates at Transport Conference in Mumbai, India

The Urban Transportation Center was represented by Director Dr. P.S. Sriraj and Visiting Professor Dr. Joseph Fazio at the 15th World Conference on Transport Research in Mumbai, India, from May 26 to 31. This well-regarded international conference featured delegates from more than 60 countries and drew 600 attendees.

The Conference covered sessions involving nine specified topic areas along with cross-disciplinary topics such as Public Transport. 1) Freight Transport and Logistics, 2) Transport Planning and Policy, 3) Traffic Management, Operations, and Safety, 4) Transport Modes, 5) Activity and Transport Demands, 6) Transport Economics and Finance, 7) Transport, Land Use and Sustainability, 8) Transport in Developing and Emerging Countries, and 9) Infrastructure Design and Maintenance. The Freight sessions were further divided into Urban Goods Movement, Freight Transport Modeling, Intermodal Freight Transport, Logistics and Freight Transport Operations, and Humanitarian Logistics in Disasters.

The Conference also offered technical visits and social tours. Technical visits took participants to Mumbai Metro One, Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust, Coastal Road Project, Mumbai Nagpur Super Communication Expressway, Navi Mumbai International Airport, Colaba—Seepz Underground Metro Rail Line, and Mumbai Harbour Link. Social tours included Kanheri Caves and Sanjay Gandhi National Park, and Gateway of India & Prince of Wales Museum with shopping.

During the Conference, Dr. Sriraj and Dr. Fazio performed outreach to attract more student applicants to the College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs and UTC by networking with delegates to rekindle professional relationships with transportation scholars and professionals from around the globe.

Mobility Management Presentation Shared at Transport Chicago

A presentation on the UTC’s research into state-level mobility management networks and practices was delivered by Director Dr. P.S. Sriraj at the 34th Annual Transport Chicago conference June 14. In the talk, Dr. Sriraj pointed out the objectives and methodology employed in the study, which included an extensive literature review, an online survey and follow up phone calls with mobility managers. Two key conclusions: Mobility networks should recruit employees with diverse educational and professional backgrounds, and network leaders support increased professionalization and accreditation.

The study is ongoing, and the Transport Chicago presentation is available from this link. These UTC researchers also contributed to the project: Lise Dirks, Em Hall and Michael McCarthy. Funding for the study was provided by the National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM) and Easterseals.
Large-scale transportation, development and infrastructure plans require a bold vision and years to complete. For the Spring 2019 Seminar Series, the Urban Transportation Center hosted presentations that addressed the regional plan for guiding the future of metropolitan Chicago, a cooperative program to improve freight and passenger rail service, and the outlook for redevelopment of a vast tract of land just south of the Loop.

Here are brief reports on the presentations offered this spring. All were held in the Great Cities Institute conference room at CUPPA Hall.

ON TO 2050: Exploring the Plan’s Digital Implementation Tools

Released in fall of 2018, the ON TO 2050 regional plan guides communities in Northeastern Illinois toward more effective transportation investments and sets the direction for development, the environment and the economy. At the presentation February 21, Tina Fassett Smith, Communications Principal at the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, demonstrated the online tools meant to guide implementation of the plan’s recommendations.

These included indicators to help measure progress of ON TO 2050 implementation, local strategy maps to provide insight on a municipal and community level and profiles of people interviewed. Ms. Smith focused comments on the Mobility chapter of the study, which recommends increased mobility options for all residents, improving transportation resiliency, and prioritizing investment in transportation improvements. Visit this page to learn more and access plan resources, including a pdf version of ON TO 2050.

Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE): Keeping the Nation’s Economy Moving

The goal of the CREATE program is quite ambitious: Increase the capacity, speed and reliability of freight traffic in the Chicago region; separate freight and commuter trains at six junctions; and, eliminate 25 road/rail grade crossings. Samuel Tuck III, the Bureau Chief of Freight Rail Management at the Illinois Department of Transportation, directs all aspects of the 70 CREATE projects, which are managed through a consortium of federal, state, county and city transportation departments, six freight railroads, Amtrak and Metra.

During his presentation March 21, Mr. Tuck said 29 CREATE projects have been completed, six are under construction, five were in the final design stages, 11 were awaiting environmental review and 19 remain. When completed, CREATE projects are estimated to yield $31.5 billion through economic benefits, reduced delays, decreased shipping costs, reduced fuel consumption and emissions, and overall safety. Download a copy of Mr. Tuck’s presentation.

The 78: Chicago’s Next Great Neighborhood

A video at the onset of the April 18 presentation cited Daniel Burnham’s mantra of “make no little plans,” the challenge to planners and developers to undertake large-scale projects that are transformative and impactful. The proposed plan to build The 78, a mixed-use neighborhood on a 62-acre parcel of land between the South Loop and Chinatown, certainly would meet those criteria.

Speaker Michael Pfeffer, Vice President of Architecture at real estate development firm Related Midwest, presented plans for the property – destined to be Chicago’s 78th neighborhood.

Plans call for up to 13 million square feet of apartment, office and retail space, a riverfront promenade and crescent-shaped park. Transportation and mobility-focused aspects include construction of a new CTA Red Line station, realignment of nearby Metra tracks, improvements to Clark Street and bikeway, waterway and pedestrian connections. Download the presentation.
The impact of land use on transportation within metropolitan Chicago and the safety of drivers and their passengers were two key topics discussed May 3 during a transportation panel discussion as part of “Our City 2049,” a presentation hosted during the Germany Week events held at the Daley Center. The UTC supported the event and Director Dr. P.S. Sriraj participated in the free-flowing, hour-long talk. He cited urban sprawl as being a factor in some transportation challenges faced today. “Land use has a significant impact of how transportation evolves, and connected to that is density of population,” he said.

On the issue of safety, one panelist noted that the absence of communication between agencies responsible for managing highways and the rail network might contribute to accidents and congestion on Chicago-area roads. Another panelist cited the increased use of hand-held devices by drivers as a major factor behind traffic mishaps. And, Chicago’s transit network was cited as being outdated by different speaker.

The talk was moderated by Bettina Oberhauser, a culture and science reporter with H.R. Fernsehen. Other participants were: Jacky Grimshaw of the Center for Neighborhood Technology; Jerry Quandt of the Illinois Autonomous Vehicle Association; Chris Kopp of HNTB; and Chris Hall of SOM.

Alumni Update: Shazal Afraaz, MS and Peter Kersten MUPP

In this issue, we feature two UTC graduate student research assistants who completed their Master’s studies and now are working in different segments of transportation. Here are their stories.

**Shazal Afraaz, ETI, MS, Civil Associate, Michael Baker International, San Antonio**

My work is mostly the design of various aspects of roadways, including alignment, pavement design, driveways and sidewalk, and traffic control plans. I am continuously learning and improving myself. Working at the UTC made me realize what my prospective career path should be within the transportation sector. The entire hierarchy of coordinating with supervisors and discussing with peers during weekly meetings is even continued in my current position. The UTC introduced its research assistants to the professional work environment before they graduated and entered the work force. Lastly, the design work I do today includes constant research and looking up of manuals, following standards and making revisions, which were honed by my past research at UTC.

**Peter Kersten, MUPP, Strategic Planner, RTA, Chicago**

I currently work within the Planning and Market Development group. My work covers a number of areas including: Mobility issues, performance metrics and reporting, policy analysis, and as project manager on the recently commenced RTA/Pace ADA Paratransit Innovation study. Working as an RA at UTC provided me with foundational regional knowledge covering service history, service structure and design, shortcomings of our network, and funding and other operational constraints as it relates specifically to the RTA region and the state as a whole. The project I worked on at UTC was specifically related to the “last mile” problem, which has informed much of my work on mobility pilots with the RTA and also was a good introduction to working with large data sets and origin-destination data.
Director’s Message: Recognizing Alumni Generosity

By Dr. P.S. Sriraj, Director

One of the most rewarding aspects of working in the academic environment is to learn that past graduate student researchers have succeeded after leaving the UIC campus. That’s the case with Amy Gao and her husband Shawn Zhang. The couple, who both earned their Master’s of Urban Planning and Policy degrees, went on to launch Spatial Front, Inc., a Washington, D.C. headquartered consulting firm that provides a wide range of technical support. Clients include two U.S. government agencies — the Department of Transportation and Federal Aviation Administration.

Moreover, there’s additional news to share. Earlier this year, Amy and Shawn established the “Gao-Zhang Graduate Fellowship Fund,” an endowed fund that will generate annual payouts in perpetuity and support graduate student fellowships that promote innovative use of technology in urban planning. The $250,000 endowment is managed by CUPPA, and CUPPA Dean Michael Pagano had the pleasure of visiting Amy and Shawn at their offices. On behalf of the entire UIC community, we sincerely thank Amy and Shawn for their generosity and commitment to advancing modern urban planning education.

Summer brings the end of the semester, generally a quiet time on campus. But there’s been lots of activity at the UTC. In early May, the Center completed the Illinois Board of Higher Education external review. Two external reviewers met with faculty, staff, students and alumni over a two-day period. The UTC was invited by Dean Pagano to help structure the September 19 UIC Urban Forum, which will concentrate on the rise of autonomous vehicles and the impact they will have on transportation, urban planning and society. Personally, I’ve remained active in sharing insight on transportation topics and issues. Here are three examples: A meeting with Chicago Transit Authority President Dorval Carter and Chief Administrator Tom McKone; participation at a May 10 meeting hosted by Congressman Sean Casten and the American Society of Civil Engineers on the financial impact of infrastructure investment on local Illinois economies; and, joining other university transportation directors at the Council of University Transportation Centers Spotlight Conference May 14 for a panel discussion before elected officials on Capitol Hill.