

## Annual Report FY 2015

### The Urban Transportation Center at the University of Illinois at Chicago

**A. Mission Statement** -- The Urban Transportation Center focuses on researching evolving transportation issues to assist the Chicago region and Illinois stakeholders and achieve national and international prominence to advance solutions for emerging transportation challenges. Our vision is that the mission will be realized by UTC staff, students and affiliated faculty through interdisciplinary research. The research will assist UTC in becoming a national and international leader in transportation. It will offer an immersive, transformative education based on real-world problems and practical student experience. Utilizing the local urban context, the Center will be an incubator for successful solutions to urban challenges while facilitating the advancement of staff, students and affiliated faculty.

**B. Impact Statement** – The UTC charged forward in AY 2015 with studies that will help enhance livability through improved transportation, and the Center created opportunities for students to gain practical experience. Research completed analyzed the use of value capture as a transit funding option, will offer transit agencies and urban planners solutions to address “last mile” barriers, can help Amtrak and freight railroads reduce delays on a shared rail corridor offering 110 mile-per-hour service, and give governments insight on how to provide necessary services to the state’s growing older adult population. Tools resulting from UTC research include a model to provide transit agencies and urban planners with knowledge to improve transportation options and enhance livability, a digital resource that better evaluates accessibility in the urban environment to key destinations using four common transportation modes, and a website containing a mapping tool and evaluation criteria that can increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the environmental impact assessment of rail infrastructure. Research underway will: Offer insight on a pilot program to increase off peak delivery of goods to help ease congestion, reduce pollution and save fuel; provide veterans in Illinois with online resources to identify existing public and specialized transportation options; and support IDOT’s future workforce needs through internships by CUPPA students. More than 30 UTC graduate research assistants participated in projects funded through the Metropolitan Transportation Support Initiative (METSII), National University Rail Center (NURail), Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) and other sources.

**C. Year’s Highlights** – In fiscal year 2015, the UTC’s overall expenditures were approximately \$2.4 million, with \$2.2 million coming from research expenditures. The UTC managed approximately 32 grants and contracts in addition to State, ICR and Gift funds. By FY 2018, the UTC is expected to increase research revenues by 20% for a target of \$2.8 million. This will be reached by maintaining the base of core IDOT funding of \$1 million annually from the METSII, TRANPRO and Research Training curriculum grants; plus, the UTC plans to secure \$1.8 million in new grants and contracts. The UTC is seeking from potential sponsors more than \$1.2 million in new revenues. In AY 2015,

the UTC employed 31 students. Five of the students were Ph.D candidates, 24 were master's degree candidates and two were undergraduate students.

Research Projects Completed In FY 2015, the UTC completed or nearly completed several research projects. Selected highlights include: Research regarding transit value capture; measuring multi-modal accessibility in Chicago; an analysis of IDOT safety oversight responsibilities; and, recommendations on how hospitals can become more "green" by encouraging employees to choose public transit and carpooling rather than driving to work alone.

Curriculum Improvements: Executive Director Steve Schlickman arranged for the CTA to underwrite the cost of a TOD studio class held during the spring semester. The class achieved up to \$6 million in increased development value of CTA property adjacent to the Wilson Avenue Red Line station.

New Research Grants The UTC will be part of a research team led by Argonne National Laboratory that will study how transit systems in Chicago and other major cities can best cope with emergencies like massive snowstorms or flooding. And, the Center will participate in a report that will provide insight on how to improve the transit system in serving the circulation and distribution needs of the Chicago Central Area and an APTA sponsored study to develop a national methodology for making ROI evaluations on high speed rail investments.

UTC 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala More than 100 guests gathered at the Metropolitan Club in Willis Tower on October 20, 2014 to celebrate the UTC's 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The gala evening event included dinner, networking and insight from four past UTC directors and Mr. Schlickman during a panel discussion led by CUPPA Dean Michael Pagano.

Regional Transit Governance Conference On January 6, more than 100 transportation industry professionals gathered at UIC for this half-day event hosted by the UTC in conjunction with the Eno Center for Transportation and TransitCenter. Improving Chicago area transit governance, performance measurement standards and the equitable distribution and oversight of public funds for public transit agencies in metropolitan Chicago were among issues addressed by elected and appointed officials who participated.

National University Rail Center (NURail) 2015 Annual Meeting The UTC joined with the College of Engineering and UIUC June 3 and 4 to host this meeting and conference at the Student Center West. Academic researchers, industry professionals and student researchers from the seven NURail partner colleges and universities participated.

Seminar Series Presentations Five presentations were delivered through the UTC Seminar Series. Topics included: Plans to build a privately-funded freight railroad around Chicago; an update on the CMAP *Fund 2040* plan; insight on autonomous vehicle technology; and, the use of "big data" in transit planning and operations.

Diversity Lunch Presentations Five noon-time presentations were held as part of the Diversity series. Topics included: Transportation options and etiquette for people with disabilities; transportation and the LGBTQ community; how international students at UIC face transportation challenges; and, the role of women in transportation management.

Transportation Industry Contributions The UTC played an active role in the Stand Up For Transportation initiative, an event held April 9 and organized by the American Public Transportation Association. Faculty researchers, staff and students actively participated in the 94<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Transportation Research Board in Washington January 11-15; faculty and affiliated researchers delivered seven presentations. And, presentations were delivered before the American Real Estate Society and Supply Chain Innovation Network. Staff served on the Steering Committee for the 2015 Transport Chicago conference held at the UIC Student Center East. Mr. Schlickman continued to serve on the American Public Transportation Association's (APTA) Legislative Committee and as the Vice Chair of the Intergovernmental Subcommittee, which seeks to improve the efficiency of federal expenditures on transportation by all federal departments and agencies.

Federal University Transportation Center Participation The UTC continued its strong collaborative research with two US DOT University Transportation Research Centers: National University Rail Center (NURail) and the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR).

Technology Transfer & Media Relations Communications plans were initiated for five completed UTC research projects in FY 2015. These coordinated activities led to increased awareness for research findings through media coverage in print and online publications, including: *Mass Transit*, *Next City.com*, *Globe St.com*, *The Springfield Journal-Register*, *Planetzien.com* and *Illinois Issues*. Research also was promoted through optimized news content on the UTC website and robust social media activities. Three UTC researchers led webinars hosted by CUTR on subjects related to completed research. Mr. Schlickman was quoted often by Chicago print and broadcast media on leading transportation issues.

Krambles Transportation Scholarship Awards Four UIC students earned cash scholarships and gained recognition for their participation in this annual competition designed to inspire the next generation of transportation professionals.

Staff Accomplishments & Additions Dr. P.S. Sriraj was appointed UTC Director of Research, and Dr. Paul Metaxatos was promoted to the rank of Research Associate Professor. Dr. Nadereh Moini was co-author of an article published in the *Journal of Transportation Safety & Security*. Jody Plahm earned the Six Sigma Green Belt certification and led the successful February 2015 move of the CUPPA Dean's Office, academic departments and research units to the Student Residence Hall. Three professionals joined as staff researchers: Dr. Robert E. Ginsburg, Mr. James C. LaBelle, and Ms. Sheena F. Frève. These researchers have strong connections within

the transportation and urban planning industry and hold the potential to generate new research opportunities.

#### **D. Goals and Targets –**

New Grants The Center is actively pursuing several new research grants. These include: Securing new research assignments from the Chicago Transit Authority, like the “Continued Collaboration Among the CTA, UIC and MIT” research that ended in 2011. Working as part of a national team to promote transit oriented development. Assisting downstate Illinois communities in building better transit systems.

Graduate Research Assistants The Center will continue to contract with UIC students to serve as graduate research assistants on current research projects.

Industry Participation The Center will strengthen the UTC’s participation in leading national, regional and local transportation industry organizations.

#### **E. UTC Staff --**

<u>Staff</u>	<u>Title</u>
Becerra, Silvia	Program Coordinator
Bury, Edward	Coordinator of Public Information
Dirks, Lise	Senior Associate
Frève, Sheena	Research Transportation/Analyst
Ginsburg, Robert	Research Assistant Professor
LaBelle, James	Senior Research Specialist
Metaxatos, Paul	Associate Director for Research Programs, Research Associate Professor
Moini, Nadereh	Research Assistant Professor
Plahm, Jody	Office Administrator
Schlickman, Stephen	Executive Director
Smith, Vanessa	Associate Director for Business Finance
Snow, Jordan	Research Transportation Planner / Analyst
Sööt, Siim	Associate Professor Emeritus
Sriraj, P.S.	Director of Research, Research Associate Professor, Director of METSI
Yanos, George	Principal Research Programmer