

Department of Transportation University Transportation Center

The University of Idaho's National Institute for Advanced Transportation Technology (NIATT) hosts researchers who develop and implement cutting-edge research and education programs with support from the U.S. Department of Transportation Research and Innovative Technology Administration.

Research focus areas

- Transportation for Livability by Integrating Vehicles and Environment, or TranLIVE, is a new \$3.5 million-per-year, national Tier One University Transportation Center led by NIATT at the University of Idaho in partnership with Syracuse University, Old Dominion University, Virginia Tech and Texas Southern University. TranLIVE focuses on a variety of research areas including a traffic data-sharing system across universities, driverless intersection controls, eco-driving methods, eco-routing based on time and traffic, communication between vehicles to steady traffic flow, vehicle performance adjustments for efficient operation optimized freight routing and decision-support tools for policy makers.
- Sustainable Solutions for Diverse Transportation Needs of the Northwest Region, also known as PacTrans, is a new \$3.5 million-per-year regional University Transportation Center led by the University of Washington in partnership with NIATT at the University of Idaho, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Oregon State University and Washington State University. Members of this consortium focus on partnering with the state departments of transportation in the region, including the Idaho Transportation Department, to solve the region's transportation problems. This regional center focuses on driver distractions and safety, using data to improve traffic movement and reduce crashes, freight routing performance to improve economic competitiveness and workforce development.



NIATT's transportation researchers have a constructive and long-term working relationship with the Idaho Transportation Department and other researchers and state departments of transportation.

Ford and Toyota Motor companies and Boeing have contacted the University of Idaho to request partnerships. The Department of Energy Pacific Northwest National Lab has also contacted the Tier One and Regional Center researchers to explore common research interests. The state of Idaho benefits directly from the new center partnerships.

Background

The University of Idaho has hosted the National Institute for Advanced Transportation since 1998. NIATT first received a national award of \$1 million per year, with competitive renewals in 2002 and 2006, and receives an annual \$1 million match from the university, the Idaho Transportation Department, and industry.

NIATT's theme, Advanced Technology for Sustainable Transportation, has four objectives:

- Develop arterial traffic management tools that can be used by practitioners and researchers to manage congestion and improve safety
- Improve the quality and economic viability of biofuels and improve the fuel economy of motorized vehicles
- Increase the number of faculty and students in NIATT research and education programs to enhance the transportation workforce
- Extend results to users and stakeholders

The U.S. Department of Transportation's transportation research granting program changed in 2011, and NIATT became leader of one of 10 national Tier One centers. It also is a partner in one of 10 regional centers. The award of these highly competitive grants is an acknowledgement of NIATT's accomplishments, partnerships, and leadership in transportation research and education.

Importance of Longer-Term Funding

The 22 new national and regional University Transportation Centers have been funded for two years with FY11 and FY12 monies that may be spent through FY14. However, the passage of Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century has again changed the landscape for the centers. There will again be a competition in 2013 for two years of funding.

Holding a competition every year or two makes it difficult to recover the considerable start-up cost for these centers and the effort required to develop proposals across institutions. Start-up costs are usually realized in return on investment after a few years of research and technology transfer. The Department of Transportation's experience with centers shows they are most productive when funded for four to five years.

FY11 University Transportation Center awards are the result of a competitive process. Many UTCs in the past were funded by earmarks, but University of Idaho's National Institute for Advanced Transportation Technology has been competitive since 2002.

For more information, please contact:

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