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University of South Florida Transportation Center gets \$3.5m USDOT grant

NCTR is competitively selected as a national University Transportation Center by the U.S. DOT.

TAMPA, Fla. (January 17, 2012) - The University of South Florida's National Center for Transit Research (NCTR) at the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) has been competitively selected as one of 22 national University Transportation Centers by the U.S. Department of Transportation. This designation will provide USF with a grant of \$3.5 million from the USDOT fiscal year 2011 budget to be matched with an additional \$3.5 million for a total of \$7 million. USF's National Center for Transit Research was selected as one of only two public transportation-focused university research programs to receive this highly competitive national grant. Sixty-three university consortiums applied.

NCTR is a consortium of four universities led by USF and includes Florida International University's Lehman Transportation Center, the University of Illinois at Chicago's Urban Transportation Center, and North Dakota State University's Small Urban and Rural Transportation Center.

Representative Kathy Castor, when told of the grant award, said, "The University Transportation Center grant will allow the National Center for Transit Research at USF to build upon its national leadership role in transit research. Investments in transportation infrastructure and construction remain a major source of local jobs and I am pleased to see that USF and the Tampa Bay Area are once again at the forefront of innovative research that will help our neighbors."

A part of USF's College of Engineering, CUTR's National Center for Transit Research was originally established in 1991 and focuses on improving the nation's transportation system by conducting research, training and teaching, and sharing information with an emphasis on public transportation and alternative forms of transportation that help to minimize traffic congestion and offer alternatives to travelers.

"We look forward to working with our research partners to provide an even higher level of support to the Federal Transit Administration, the Florida Department of Transportation, and the hundreds of transit agencies across the state and country," said John Wiencek, dean of the College of Engineering.

“This successful competition assures our participation in the UTC Program through 2013,” said Jason Bittner, CUTR’s newly appointed director. “This grant will allow NCTR to improve the performance of transit agencies while also helping us develop the professional capabilities of students interested in careers in transportation. We are especially grateful to our main funding partner, the Florida DOT for contributing to our success in the program.”

Prior competitive UTC grants received by the National Center for Transit Research have provided USF with \$1 million dollars annually which were matched by the Florida Department of Transportation. In the new consortium, USF will retain \$1.75 million dollars from the federal government as the lead member of the consortium matched by state and local funds to bring the total program budget for USF to \$3.5 million. The entire \$7.0 million grant will be administered by USF.

“We are very honored that for the third consecutive time since 2002, we have been successful in competition with so many other universities around the country to be selected to serve as a federally funded University Transportation Center,” said Joel Volinski, NCTR Director. “This grant is considerably larger than any we have received in the past, and provides evidence of the value NCTR provides to the improvement of our state and national transportation systems.

The UTC Program was established in 1987 with the mission "to advance U.S. technology and expertise in the many disciplines comprising transportation through the mechanisms of education, research, and technology transfer at university-based centers of excellence."

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The University of South Florida is one of the nation's top 63 public research universities and one of only 25 public research universities nationwide with very high research activity that is designated as community engaged by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. USF was awarded \$394.1 million in research contracts and grants in FY 2009/2010. The university offers 232 degree programs at the undergraduate, graduate, specialist and doctoral levels, including the doctor of medicine. The USF System has a \$1.8 billion annual budget, an annual economic impact of \$3.2 billion, and serves more than 47,000 students on institutions/campuses in Tampa, St. Petersburg, Sarasota-Manatee and Lakeland. USF is a member of the Big East Athletic Conference.

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