

# TRANSNOW

## University Transportation Center for Federal Region X at the University of Washington

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### RITA Visits TransNow

On November 6, University Transportation Center (UTC) program specialists Lydia Mercado, Robin Kline, and Amy Stearns from the Research and Innovative Technology Administration (RITA), United States Department of Transportation visited the UW campus to get an update on the Transportation Northwest (TransNow) regional center program.



The site visit began with a financial process overview by Mike Blackwell and Matthew Hawkins, from the University of Washington (UW) Office of Sponsored

Programs, and Tami Sadusky, from the UW Grants and Contract Accounting Office. These administrative representatives briefed the UTC program specialists on the UW grant funding process from pre-award to post-award.

TransNow faculty presented updates on academic and research programs supported by TransNow. Professor Scott Rutherford presented information on the TransNow Advanced Institute program in which internships, scholarships, and exchange programs within the center assist aspiring transportation students. Current and former transportation students Ryan Avery, Euneka Robinson-McCutchen, Kathy Davis, and Yegor Malinovskiy spoke of the many benefits the program has provided to each of them, from financial support to professional experience.

Professor and Associate Director Joe Mahoney spoke about TransNow's support for *Pavement Interactive*, a wiki-based resource program for transportation and construction students and professionals. In addition, Associate Director Pete Briglia addressed the plans for the TransNow videoconference facility which should be ready in early 2008.

Following lunch, TransNow faculty and staff, and RITA representatives met with the Dean of the College of Engineering, Matt O'Donnell, and the Associate Dean of New Initiatives, Dan Schwartz, to discuss UW support for TransNow.

Barnie Jones, Research Manager, Oregon Department of Transportation and Leni Oman,

Research Director, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) joined the meeting to explain the proposed regional pooled fund project which is an effort for the regional UTCs and DOTs to provide pooled financial support for research in areas of shared interest. In addition, Mark Hallenbeck, UW Director of the Washington State Transportation Center (TRAC), addressed the working relationship between TRAC and TransNow.

Megan Hall, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) representative, discussed FHWA's role in TransNow program activities.

Professor Yinhai Wang and PhD candidate Ryan Avery highlighted the Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) program and current research in the Star Lab. They also spoke about the importance of the Star Lab start-up funding received from TransNow and how the center continues to contribute valuable project funding for current

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### New Center Faculty

This October, TransNow welcomed an addition to its center personnel: Professor Ed McCormack, Co-Director of the TransNow Freight Program and Research Assistant Professor.



*Prof. Ed McCormack*

In addition to his research activities, Professor McCormack teaches courses on freight transportation in the UW CEE Department. He also lectures on critical infrastructure protection in the UW Department of Urban Design and Planning and works part-time at TRAC as a senior research engineer.

Ed's areas of research include the use of technology to improve freight mobility and the development of freight performance measures. His projects include using existing transponder-based systems

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## TransNow Internship Program at WSDOT TMC

TransNow's undergraduate internship program with WSDOT's Traffic Management Center (TMC) began in 1998 to enrich students' education and provide field experience. Over the past nine years the program has produced many successful transportation engineers and fostered students' interest in pursuing an advanced degree in transportation engineering.

Interns receive coveted financial support and field experience through the program. There are many examples of students who have benefited from the program, and Euneka Robinson-McCutchen is one example. Euneka was employed at a grocery store when she made the decision to attend the UW and pursue a Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering and begin an internship at the TMC. Euneka recently remarked on her internship experience:

In my [WSDOT/TMC] internship...I was amazed at the depth and breadth of my responsibilities from the time I started. While interning in my junior year in the Civil Engineering department TransNow paid my tuition and set me up to work in WSDOT's TMC. My responsibilities included but were not limited to monitoring Puget Sound's highways for traffic incidents and responding to alert the public of and keep the roadways clear of any collisions, disabled vehicles, or other highway incidents, turning on, off and optimizing ramp meters,



Euneka Robinson-McCutchen

conducting travel time studies, and producing requested reports regarding traffic volumes, occupancy, travel time, and congestion. During my senior year I was training new interns to do the things I had learned the previous year, and during my graduate studies I was hired part time as an engineer to supervise the TMC. Throughout this period

I gained in-depth knowledge of the dynamics of groups and job responsibilities within WSDOT and public agencies in general. This internship allowed me to meet and network with the people that I intended to work for after I graduated. After obtaining my Master's degree in Civil Engineering in 2007 I became a full time employee with WSDOT as a Signals Engineer. TransNow and this internship played a tremendous role in helping me achieve my goals during college and giving me a strong start in my career. Thank you TransNow!

For more information about the program and the application

process please contact the Director of TransNow's Internship Program: Scott Rutherford (scottrut@u.washington.edu).

## Fall Student Welcome

On October 26, TransNow held a welcome pizza party for transportation students, faculty, and UW CEE department staff. Over 70 attendees took a break from work for some well-deserved refreshment and fellowship.



Students spoke with faculty and staff about upcoming transportation events in the community and classes within the department. In addition, faculty and staff had the opportunity to meet new students and re-acquaint with continuing students. TransNow sponsors student welcome events every quarter. Stay posted for information about the upcoming winter quarter student reception.

## RITA Visits TransNow

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ITS research projects today. Later that afternoon, the RITA team visited the Star Lab where researchers highlighted its traffic, incident, and pedestrian monitoring research using video and loop detection.

The site visit also included a videoconference with TransNow center consortium members at Washington State University (WSU). Visitors spoke with Dave McLean, Chair of the WSU Civil and Environmental Engineering (CEE) Department, and researchers Dave Pollock, Mohamed ElGawady, Adrian Rodriguez-Marek, and Eric Jessup.

The visit concluded with a tour of some of TransNow's facilities, including the soon-to-be-completed videoconference center in More Hall. RITA representatives then joined with members of the UW CEE Department and TransNow faculty and staff for dinner.

## New Center Faculty

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to track performance of trucks on roadways and exploring the use of electronic door seals to facilitate container movement through international land borders.

Ed is an invaluable asset to TransNow. The center looks forward to his service to the UW CEE Department and the local transportation community.



Alaska



Idaho



Oregon



Washington

## Fall Region X Meeting

Region X members gathered at UW in early October to discuss research, academic outreach efforts, professional recruitment, and regional collaboration. Initial discussions centered around advancing innovative research. Examples include the Alaska University Transportation Center's (AUTC) project on the resiliency of vegetation near highways and TransNow's project to develop the first environmental ratings system for roadway design and construction. The centers are hopeful that these projects will build a connection between transportation and the environment, and result in a transportation system that is both efficient and safe for the environment.

Discussions also focused on creating more academic opportunities for transportation students. The National Institute for Advanced Transportation Technology (NIATT) at the University of Idaho (UI) is looking to construct a more hands-on approach to teaching junior level transportation courses by surveying current teaching practices. They are confident this will result in a better understanding of students' academic needs and interests. NIATT also looks forward to including other fields of study, such as economics and philosophy, to build a more broadly-based curriculum.

Meeting attendees also discussed the importance of increasing the number of civil engineers specializing in the transportation field. It was identified that maintaining relationships between the UTCs and the region's private and public sponsors will increase future professional recruitment. These stronger relationships will demonstrate to students a more promising future within the industry.

Attendees also addressed regional collaboration and highlighted the possibility of creating a pooled fund project to perform research on areas of shared interest. The hope is that this proposal will create a stronger transportation research and planning region and unite individual interests and goals into one common agenda. For detailed meeting notes please visit <http://www.transnow.org/regionx/meetings/meeting-notes-10-07/index.php>.

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## 2007 TransNow Student Conference

The 5th annual TransNow Student Conference was hosted by Portland State University (PSU) on Friday, November 16, 2007. Sixty-four transportation students from eight Northwest universities in AK, ID, OR and WA gathered to showcase their research, meet with peers, and foster mutual understanding between future transportation planners and engineers. Several UW students were sponsored by TransNow to attend the event. Faculty are not involved in the TransNow student conferences in any way, which allows students to present research and exchange ideas with peers in an environment that is not typically found in the classroom or at other conferences.

During the conference a professional panel discussed "bigger picture" issues in transportation with students. Students gave presentations on research and practice. Awards were given for best presentations. Tied for first place were: Kenneth Perrine, UW, for "RateMyRoads.org: A Place to Give Feedback on Roads," and Ariana Tipper, PSU, for "Evacuation Planning and Neighborhood Empowerment in New Orleans: The Broadmoor Model". Second place went to Mathew Berkow, PSU, for "The Oregon Land Use Stories Project". Third place was given to Hong Zhu, Oregon State University, for "Acceleration Models for Urban Signalized Condition". A number of students also presented posters highlighting their research. The conference concluded with a keynote address on "Rethinking Congestion" by Professor Brian Taylor of the University of California at Los Angeles.

Many thanks to Oren Eshel who chaired the student planning committee and did a wonderful job coordinating the conference. For more information and pictures please visit: <http://www.transnow.org/education/opportunities/>.



*Oren Eshel, PSU*

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## Online Regional Directory

TransNow's website contains an interactive regional directory that lists many of the UTC and DOT Region X members. The directory contains current contact information for each listing, highlights field specialties, and includes other useful information such as recently published papers. To view the directory please visit: <http://www.transnow.org/regionx/directory/>. Members can login to the secure site and update their information at any time. To create your own listing in the directory please send an email with your name and contact info to [transnow@u.washington.edu](mailto:transnow@u.washington.edu).

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## TransNews

### *Kelly Pitera 2007 SOY*

UW Student, Kelly Pitera, has been named the 2007 TransNow Student of the Year. Kelly was awarded for her excellence in education, initiative, and enthusiasm as a student and will be recognized at the Council of University Transportation Centers (CUTC) annual banquet held in conjunction with the Transportation Research Board annual meeting in Washington, D.C. TransNow is supporting Kelly's travel costs as well as awarding \$1000 toward her academic or professional goals.

### *TransNow/ARTBA Webcast*

On January 14, 2008, TransNow faculty will share a webcast on pavement research and education with the Young Executives of the American Road & Transportation Builders Association. Professors Joe Mahoney and Steve Muench from the UW will present current and future innovative pavement projects including Pavement Interactive, Green Roads, Virtual Paving Equipment, and Solar Pavement. For information on this webcast, contact Alison Black at [ablack@artba.org](mailto:ablack@artba.org).

## Regional News

### *AUTC to Host May Region X Meeting*

The Alaska UTC will host the Spring 2008 Region X Meeting at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks. The meeting will take place sometime in May, but stay posted for updates. The meeting will address topics such as creating a common agenda amongst the region's UTCs and DOTs.

### *ITD Engineers Experiment with VISSIM*

The Office of Highway Operation and Safety of the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) arranged for one person from each of its six districts to attend a workshop on November 8 at NIATT to learn how to use VISSIM. Graduate student Guillermo Madrigal introduced the simulation software and other graduate students provided assistance to the engineers as they attempted to model their sample network. For more information please visit <http://www.webs1.uidaho.edu/niatt/>.