

UTC CONNECTOR

Urban Transportation Center at the University of Illinois at Chicago

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Spring 2003

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UTC Reports Transportation Clearinghouse Survey Results

In the spring, UTC tabulated the first-year results of the research for its contract to develop a Transportation Information Clearinghouse (TIC). A key finding was the low awareness of the availability of pre-tax transportation benefits among employers. The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), which provides funding to the TIC, recognizes the potential to increase transit use by expanding their "Transit Check" program.

The objective of TIC was to inventory and document the region's non-public/non-traditional transportation services and develop a plan to assimilate this information into a common database. The TIC is the outcome of a partnership among the RTA, the Workforce Boards of Metropolitan Chicago, and UTC.

The groups determined that such a project was needed because traditional transportation providers operate in limited geographies and time periods, while job seekers often find opportunities for entry-level employment in

locations and/or during time periods of time when work trips cannot be conveniently made using these traditional providers. In the Chicago metropolitan region, many non-traditional transportation services operate at times and in locations that could provide needed links in the home/work trips for some job seekers.

To gather the data for the clearinghouse, a preliminary survey was mailed out to every employer with at least 50 employees at a work site in the eight-county greater Chicago region. In all, more than 14,000 employers were surveyed.

To date, over 2,000 employers have responded to the preliminary survey. Only six percent of employers indicated they currently or previously provided transportation services for their employees. The breakdown of commuter benefits offered by respondents is in the chart to the right.

Of the employers who offer pre-tax benefits, 40

RESULTS

Staggered hours	30%
Compressed week	8%
Flextime	29%
Preferred parking for car/van pools	6%
Employee-paid pre-tax benefit	14%
Employer-paid pre-tax benefit	6%
Emergency ride home	14%
Parking cash out	4%
Telework	12%

percent manage the benefit in-house and about 40 percent utilize the RTA program. The remaining employers use a wide variety of third-party administrators.

For employers who indicated current or former private transportation service, a longer, more detailed questionnaire was developed to gain operational and financial data as well as why the service was implemented. To date, over 120 questionnaires have been delivered, with 28

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The spring semester always seems to end with a flurry of activity. Many of the research assistants are eagerly anticipating their internships or new jobs, and there is a lull until the next round of deadlines. I can reflect on the semester. This semester, we reviewed a lot of graduate applications. There were over forty applications for the new PhD program in Urban Planning and Policy, and over two hundred applications for masters programs in Urban Planning and Policy or Civil Engineering.

As graduate education is so important to the goals and objectives of the Urban Transportation Center, I wanted to share with prospective students, prospective employers, current students, past students and friends what I look for when I read a graduate application. The typical graduate application for Urban Planning and Policy includes the application form, a statement of purpose, transcripts, a writing sample, and letters of recommendation.

For the Masters of Urban Planning and Policy (MUPP) applicants who indicate that they are interested in transportation, I have specific criteria

I use during an initial screening. First, does the applicant have any quantitative skills? While we are eager to have students from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, urban transportation planning uses some basic mathematical models to represent travel behavior, and traffic. Second, I look to see if the applicant knows anything at all about the transportation profession. Everyone is a transportation consumer (even if they walk or ride a bicycle) but going beyond personal experiences requires more than an



Sue McNeil
UTC Director

interest and awareness of the connections between transportation and land use, economic development, or the environment.

For the PhD students, I want to be sure that the student knows what they are getting into. This is a commitment. It will not always be easy, and it is not a program for acquiring skills or learning new material. The PhD is a research program that includes identifying an interesting and challenging problem, exploring solution strategies, justifying your methodology, producing results, and communicating in writing and through presentations why this is an important problem and what your contributions are. In other words, it is doing research. You need quantitative,

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UTC Connector

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UTC Connector is produced by the Urban Transportation Center at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Please contact Audrey Wennink at awitte1@uic.edu with any news or questions.

UTC's Mission

"To understand and improve urban transportation through creation, application and dissemination of transportation knowledge while also making use of the Chicago metropolitan area as a living laboratory."

The Urban Transportation Center is a research unit within UIC's College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs (CUPPA).

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OTHER NEWS

UTC Staff Coordinate Workshop on Transit Benefits

The Midwest Chapter of the Association for Commuter Transportation, headed by UTC staffers Shamus Misek and Karin Allen, in conjunction with the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS), held a one-day workshop on implementing pre-tax commuter choice benefits on February 21, 2003 at the CATS offices. More than thirty attendees from three Midwestern states heard from Transportation Demand Management experts on how to set up a Commuter Choice program for their organizations.

The morning keynote speaker was Phil Winters, TDM Program Director for the Center of Urban Transportation Research at the University of South Florida. Phil addressed the issue of why employers should consider implementing a Commuter Choice program in spite of a sluggish economy. He also discussed new resources to calculate benefits, the Federal Commuter Tax Benefit, and an evaluation of Transportation Management Associations (TMAs).

Ann Ross of CATS presented results of the RideShare Survey of Chicago area commuters. Fifty-five percent of respondents indicated they make a suburb-to-suburb commute.

Respondents indicated that top three incentives to participate in a ridesharing program are: reduced income taxes, reduced car insurance, and free guaranteed ride home. The two top employer incentives were free guaranteed ride home and pre-tax carpool/vanpool expenses.

Tom Vick of CATS presented an update on TEA legislation. A luncheon



convening Chicago area TMAs was held with Phil Winters, and was a first-time event for the Chicago area.

The afternoon keynote speaker was Mark Gorman, National Commute Reduction Manager of Intel Corporation of Hillsboro, OR. Mark gave an entertaining presentation on Intel's commute reduction efforts, including

the "Rideshare Game," a card game which can be used to educate kids about the benefits of changing family driving habits.

The first afternoon panel focused on what steps to take to plan events and work with the media. Four speakers, including representatives from the meeting planning, media, and hotel industry, discussed tips on how to plan a successful event.

The final panel was composed of three Chicago area organizations that deal with commuting issues in a variety of ways. Dee Chigas from BP, Barbara Hayskar from the Prairie Stone TMA, and Tim Grzesiakowski from Hewitt Associates described efforts that their organizations use to address commuting issues in Chicago and around the U.S.

Audience feedback on the program was very positive. The Midwest Chapter has an additional program in Chicago scheduled for Thursday, October 16, 2003. For additional information please contact Shamus Misek or Karin Allen at 312/996-4820.

Letter from the Director, from page 2

qualitative, analytical and communications skills, intellectual curiosity, tenacity, motivation, and a reason for giving up three to five years of your life to work on this.

Clearly, for all applicants the "Statement of Purpose" is important. I want the applicant to tell me why they want to join the program, what specific areas they are interested in, and what they would like to do when

they graduate. Woven into this narrative should be clues that tell me that they are committed to transportation, that they have done some homework and know something about what we do, and that either classroom, work or life experiences have given them some skills or experiences or knowledge that they will bring to the program.

Can I tell from an application if someone will be successful? Can I tell if this is the right program for them? Obviously, I cannot. I have to make a judgment call based on past experiences, and what that application

tells me about the applicant. Fortunately, I am not the only person reading applications and each of us may see different things. Admission is competitive and resources for financial support are very tight. However, we want to admit and support students who will take advantage of the opportunities at UTC.

As you see elsewhere in this edition of the UTC Connector, we have every right to be proud of our students.

CLEARINGHOUSE RESULTS

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responses received. Responses have revealed a typology of private employers who primarily use company-owned-and-operated, fixed-route service accessible to their employees only. An overwhelming majority (88 percent) do not share routes with other companies, even in cases where neighboring companies also provide transportation service. The providing companies generally cover the cost of the service without charging their employees for usage.

The reasons employers gave for offering transportation service were safety and convenience, company relocation, lack of public transportation, and as a recruitment tool. The benefits of offering transportation included increased employee retention, employee appreciation/increased morale, and an

expanded labor pool. Problems faced by employers providing transportation included high cost of the service, concerns about liability issues, finding qualified drivers, low participation, and difficulties in getting the service started.

Clearinghouse staff also noted an unusually high turnover rate for transportation coordinators at companies; individuals serving in this capacity do not generally do so as a full-time position. Often, transportation coordination is designated as a small percentage of an individual's full-time job, and, as a result, historical and operational data has been lost and there is no transfer of knowledge from one coordinator to the next. This may indicate a need to develop a structured operational guideline/handbook for distribution to regional

transportation coordinators.

The second year of the project, currently underway, will see a continuation of data collection efforts. To address educational concerns, a series of round-table discussions will be held to deliver the message about commuter benefits as well as to garnish more participation from private employers in the direction of TIC activities. TIC staff has and will continue to work with transit providers, social service agencies, and private employers to see where and how coordination efforts could occur, and will act to facilitate such coordination in the effort to break down barriers to effective transportation services for the region's employees.

METSI Highlights

Intermodal Freight

A proposal to the National Science Foundation by Northwestern University and UIC has been selected for funding. The project will receive \$600,000 over three years to develop a decision support tool for freight infrastructure planning and operation. The UTC team will contribute in the areas of cost and benefit calculations and coordination of stakeholders.

UIC Campus Shuttle Program

UIC is developing a real time traveler information system for the UIC Campus Shuttle service that identifies the current location of the shuttle bus via GPS location technology and maps

the progress of the vehicle on the University website. All buses have the units installed and the demonstration can be viewed at www.uic.edu/cuppa/utc. The system was formally announced to the campus community in February. While the project is still in the testing phase, staff have been obtaining users' input on the website and planning changes accordingly.

Pedestrian Safety

UTC has completed its research on pedestrian safety in Illinois. The report highlights the statewide improvements in pedestrian traffic safety, as the annual number of

fatalities have declined from 272 in 1990 to 187 in 2000, or a drop of 31 percent. There is room for improvement, however, especially in Cook County which accounts for over 55 percent of the state's fatalities. Its per capita fatality rate is 50 percent higher than the statewide rate. The study also shows that there seems to be a climate effect, with a high association between fatality rates and the latitude of the county. This corresponds with national studies that show higher fatality rates in southern

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OTHER NEWS

UTC Students and Faculty Present Research

**Transportation Research Board
Annual Meeting, January 12 - 16,
2003, Washington, D.C.**

Sue McNeil, The Application of
Nondestructive Evaluation to Subway
Tunnel Systems

Sue McNeil, Michael J. Schiffer,
Graham Garfield, Beth Donahue,
Arnab Chakraborty, Jung-Taek Lee,
Piyushimita Thakuriah, A Spatial
Multimedia Representation of the
Chicago Transit Authority's Rail
Infrastructure

Jung-Taek Lee and Piyushimita
Thakuriah, Application of
Probabilistic Linkage to Commercial
Motor Vehicle and Carrier Study

Piyushimita Thakuriah, Markov Chain
Monte Carlo Methods: Applications
for Imputation of Missing Data in
Transportation Databases

Kazuya Kawamura, Anusha
Seetharaman ('02) and Saurav Dev
Bhatta, Economic Benefits of Freight
Policy Relating to the Trucking
Industry: An Evaluation of the RTP
Freight Policy for the Chicago Six
County Region

Shaumik Pal, P.S. Sriraj, Sue McNeil,
Evaluation of Private Sector Asset
Management Practices

Kazuya Kawamura, Perceived
Benefits of Congestion Pricing for
Trucks

Anthony Pagano and Paul Metaxatos,
Measuring Intercity Bus
Transportation Unmet Needs

**UIC Conference on the Environment
April 9-10, 2003**

Siim Sööt, Urban Sprawl Changing
Impacts on the Urban Environment

Paul Metaxatos, Changes in Spatial
Distribution of Mobile Source
Emissions due to Interactions
between Land-use and Regional
Transportation Systems

Sue McNeil, Moderator, Session 6:
Transportation and Environmental
Policy

P.S. Sriraj, Statewide Transportation
Planning and NEPA: Its
Effectiveness, Issues, and Solutions

Anthony Pagano, Reducing
Automobile Congestion and Pollution
using Transportation Demand
Management: Cost and Effectiveness
Estimates from the Chicago Area

**Transport Chicago 2003, June 7,
2003, UIC**

Haidong Zhu, Developing a Rail
Service Interruption Model for CTA

Shaumik Pal, Juan Ortega and
Audrey Wennink, Productivity
Benefits of a GPS Based Traveler
Information System-a Case Study of
the UIC Shuttle Bus System

Sudeshna Sen, Decision Support
Tools for Stakeholders Dealing with
Low-Income Accessibility Projects in
the Chicago Metropolitan Region

Hyeon-Shic Shin, Conceptualization
of a Methodology for Measuring
Freight Mobility by Trucks

Posters

Jeromie Winsor, Internet
Communities of Practice for
Transportation Professionals

Norma, Pena-Rivera, An Alternative
Taxonomy for Planning Support
Systems

Web Publishing

Shaumik Pal, Establishing Linkages
Between Asset Management and
Intelligent Transportation Systems

Other Presentations/Publications

Pagano, Anthony, Paul Metaxatos and
Mark King, Impact of Computer-
Assisted Scheduling and Dispatching
Systems on Paratransit Service
Quality. National Academy of
Sciences, Transportation Research
Board, Transportation Research
Record 1791, 2002, pp. 51-58

Roseann O'Laughlin, Listening to the
City-Town Meeting in New York City,
UPP Friday Research Forum January
24, 2003

Piyushimita Thakuriah, Intelligent
Transportation Systems: Vehicular and
Road Technology of the Future, UIC
Provost's The Cutting Edge Seminar
Series 2003, March 1

Kazuya Kawamura, Developing a Plan
from Bottom Up: A Case Study of
Public Involvement, May 12, 2003,
Center for Transportation Planning
Research, Tokyo, Japan

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OTHER NEWS

Presentations/Publications, from page 5

Kazuya Kawamura, Addressing Freight Transportation Needs: National, State, and Regional Perspective, May 13, 2003, Tokyo Institute of Technology, Tokyo, Japan

Kazuya Kawamura, Financing Transportation Projects in the U.S.: Federal, State, and Local Perspectives, May 16, 2003 Institute of Regional Economic Research, Fukui Prefectural University, Fukui, Japan

Kazuya, Kawamura, Addressing Freight Transportation Needs in the US: National, State, and Regional Perspective, May 19, 2003, Kyoto University, Kyoto, Japan

Kazuya Kawamura, Assessment of the Relationship between Vehicle Type Mix and the Benefit of Freight Projects, June 26, 2003, Third International Conference on City Logistics, Madeira, Portugal

Jiangping Zhou and Vonu Thakuriah, Federal Level Mobility-Related Legislation in the U.S. and Implications for China, The 3rd International Conference of Chinese Young Transportation Professionals, May 25-26, Beijing, China--Cancelled

Professor Pagano was elected to the position of Program Vice President Elect of the Transportation Research Forum

Former Director of UTC David Boyce, Ph.D. to Retire

Dr. David Boyce, Professor of Transportation & Regional Science in the Civil and Materials Engineering Department and former Director of the Urban Transportation Center is retiring after more than 30 years of work in transportation research. To mark this occasion UTC has invited several of Dr. Boyce's former students and colleagues to give presentations on his contributions to the field. The event will take place on the afternoon of July 16, 2003. A reception will follow the presentations. Please contact Gabrielle Brown <gabbyliz@uic.edu> for more details.

UTC Students Win Awards

Juan Ortega, a Ph.D. candidate at UTC, is the recipient of the International Service Award from the University of Illinois at Chicago, which recognizes international students who have distinguished themselves through volunteer service in the campus and Chicago communities. Ortega is the President-elect of the Rotaract Club of Chicago for 2003-2004, a Rotary-sponsored service club for young men and women ages 18 to 30.

Norma Pena-Rivera, a Ph.D. candidate at UTC, has been awarded the George Krambles Scholarship Award for 2003. She is one of six recipients nationwide to win the award worth \$2,500. The scholarship is named for the former executive director of the Chicago Transit Authority. The scholarship was established with the purpose of

encouraging young people to pursue professions in transportation. Pena-Rivera is also the recipient of the prestigious Eno Transportation Foundation Fellowship to attend its Leadership Development Conference in Washington, D.C. from May 19-23. This week-long conference brings together a single outstanding student from each of the major graduate transportation programs in the country for a week of educational programming, meetings with legislators and sessions about transportation policy, and culminates in a mock Congressional hearing.

Audrey Wennink, a MUPP student, was selected as this year's recipient of the Phillip D. Peters Regional Planning Fellowship by the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NI PC). She will be focusing her work as a Fellow this summer on

Common Ground, the organization's long-range regional planning process. The Fellowship was established by NI PC in 1999 to honor the late Phil Peters, its former Executive Director. Mr. Peters retired in 1998 after completing more than thirty years of extraordinary service to NI PC, during which time he played a major role in the development and implementation of the agency's innovative, comprehensive program for the Chicago metropolitan area.

Sudeshna Sen, a MUPP student, was awarded the Women's Transportation Seminar Helene Overly memorial Graduate Scholarship, which she will receive at the WTS annual meeting June 4. Sen will pursue a Ph.D. in Civil Engineering at the University of Texas-Austin in the fall.

Fall Symposium to Focus on Circumferential Transportation Systems

The Urban Transportation Center will hold its annual fall symposium on Friday, October 17, 2003, at the UIC Student Services Building. With the share of suburb-to-suburb commuter traffic steadily increasing and the existing radial systems not set up to handle this flow, circumferential rail has been under discussion in several U.S. Metro areas in recent years. The day's event will include a discussion of circumferential rail proposals in Chicago, as well as a review of circle lines in other large cities throughout the world.

The luncheon keynote speaker will be Kirk Brown, Hanson Engineers, Springfield and former Secretary of Transportation for the State of Illinois. Other speakers and panelists will include Phil Pagano, Executive Director, Metra; Mike Shiffer, Ph.D., Vice President Planning and Development, CTA; and John McCarron, Adjunct Professor Northwestern University and writer on urban affairs. Save the date and check the UTC website for updates at www.uic.edu/cuppa/utc.

UTC Holds Annual Retreat at Chicago Cultural Center



UTC Director Sue McNeil coordinates a group workshop at the UTC annual retreat in January. Students and faculty came together for the one-day event, where they participated in team-building exercises and long-range strategic planning for the Center.

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METSI Highlights, from p.4

metropolitan areas. Several of these reports, however, attribute these higher rates to sprawl; southern metro areas tend to be newer than northern metro areas, (e.g., Phoenix versus Boston), and therefore typically have lower population densities, or more sprawl.

Census 2000

UTC researchers have analyzed and mapped the differences between the travel times to work for the two largest counties in the nation, Los Angeles and Cook. Not only does Los Angeles County have lower travel times, but the highest travel times are also associated with high-income neighborhoods. In contrast, Cook County has substantially longer travel times, especially in low-income neighborhoods. This is particularly true on the south side of the city, where

the lack of local jobs translates into inordinately high travel times for those individuals who work. Transportation and other solutions need to be developed for these neighborhoods.

UTC staff have also finished the first report from the Census Transportation Planning Package (CTPP). This examines the county-to-county trip data released in March 2003 and reveals some important changes in commuting and the factors that affect commuting patterns. Most importantly, for the first time in over forty years, the population of the region grew more rapidly (1990 to 2000) than the number of commuters. The 11 percent increase in population translated into only seven percent growth in the number of commuters. This modest increase in commuters, smaller than in previous decades, has had a milder impact on the number of commuters and traffic congestion than anticipated.

Mark Your Calendars

*Metropolitan Conference on
Public Transportation Research
(MCPTR)*

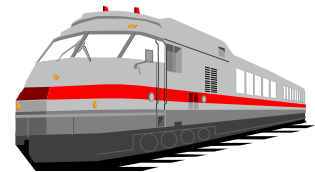
*June 6, 2003
UIC*

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*UTC Fall Symposium
October 17, 2003
UIC*

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*Transportation Research Board
Annual Meeting
January 11-15, 2004*



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