

UTCA

University Transportation Center for Alabama

The University of Alabama, The University of Alabama at Birmingham,
And The University of Alabama in Huntsville

Request for Pre-Proposals For 2010 Projects

(To be prepared and submitted prior to noon on September 29, 2009)

Open to faculty and staff members of

The University of Alabama System
(UA, UAB, and UAH)

September 4, 2009

INTRODUCTION

About the Center

The University Transportation Center for Alabama (UTCA) is a joint effort of the three campuses comprising the University of Alabama System: UA, UAB, and UAH. It is headquartered on the UA campus with local offices on the three campuses. All faculty and staff members on all three campuses are eligible to submit pre-proposals for UTCA projects.

Mission Statement and Strategic Goals

The mission of UTCA is to advance the technology and expertise in the multiple disciplines that comprise transportation through the mechanisms of education, research, and technology transfer while serving as a university-based center of excellence. The UTCA strategic plan contains six goals that support this mission, as listed below:

- (a) Education – conduct a multidisciplinary program of coursework and experiential learning that reinforces the theme of transportation;
- (b) Human Resources – increase the number of students, faculty and staff who are attracted to and substantively involved in the undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs of UTCA;
- (c) Diversity – develop students, faculty and staff who reflect the growing diversity of the US workforce and are substantively involved in the undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs of UTCA;
- (d) Research Selection – utilize an objective process for selecting and reviewing research that balances the multiple objectives of the program;
- (e) Research Performance – conduct an ongoing program of basic and applied research, the products of which are judged by peers or other experts in the field to advance the body of knowledge in transportation; and
- (f) Technology Transfer – ensure the availability of research results to potential users in a form that can be directly implemented, utilized or otherwise applied.

Center Theme

The theme for UTCA is **MANAGEMENT AND SAFETY OF TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS**. The management portion of the theme allows UTCA to conduct research that supports the national program of surface transportation research as described in the 2010 UTCA Annual Research Plan.

PROPOSAL/PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS

Project Funding

There are significant changes from previous years in how projects will be selected for funding:

1. There is no requirement for matching funds.
2. Preference will be given to proposers who show how they plan to use UTCA funds as seed money to generate successful proposals to external funding agencies. Such a plan may include a project deliverable of a credible, well-researched proposal to a specific external funding agency.
3. If the proposer has received UTCA funds previously, preference will be given to proposers who demonstrate that they have published refereed papers from the previous UTCA research. If the proposer has received UTCA funding previously, preference will be given to proposers who leveraged UTCA funds to receive follow-up, external funds.
4. If the proposer has received UTCA funds previously for “diversity/education” projects and is applying for additional funds in that area, the proposal should demonstrate past program effectiveness.

The UTCA Executive Committee anticipates funding 7-8 projects using approximately \$700k of 2010 U.S. Department of Transportation funds, and it is possible that additional projects will be funded as the year unfolds.

UTCA project funding may be used for typical research, technology transfer, and education project expenses that support project accomplishment, within the restrictions of Federal and State of Alabama law and the various regulations of the involved universities. Examples include (but are not limited to) faculty, staff and student salaries, fringe benefits, domestic travel, supplies, equipment, and overhead.

Special Consideration for Certain Types of Projects

It is important that UTCA build a strong, interdisciplinary network of faculty and staff members working on transportation issues on all three campuses. In addition, it is important that UTCA recognize and serve the needs of a variety of transportation stakeholders across Alabama and the nation. This requires special consideration of certain types of projects. A partial list of such considerations is indicated below but is defined fully in the UTCA 2010 Annual Research Plan:

- Proposals addressing the national surface transportation research program, and especially proposals that address the UTCA theme and emphasis area, will receive highest priority.
- Proposals addressing the Federal Transit Administration Strategic Research Plan or Section I.3 of the UTCA Annual Research/Training Plan will also receive high priority.
- Proposals satisfying items #2-#3 in the list above will receive high priority.

- Proposals leveraging substantial portions of matching funds provided by external sources will receive greater consideration for funding.
- Proposals that build transportation expertise within the University of Alabama System (educational issues, human resources, diversity, research, etc.) are highly encouraged.
- Proposals that deliver technology transfer to transportation stakeholders within Alabama, the region, and the nation are strongly encouraged.
- Proposals from new faculty members and proposals from faculty members who desire to affiliate with UTCA but have not previously conducted transportation projects are encouraged.
- Research initiation proposals by junior faculty that address the UTCA theme and high priority research areas are encouraged.

Proposal Submission and Evaluation Sequence

- Brief pre-proposals will be solicited from all faculty and staff members on all campuses (i.e., via this document). Pre-proposals will be due prior to noon on September 29, 2009.
- The pre-proposals will be reviewed by the UTCA Advisory Board and Executive Committee members. Authors will be notified of the review results by October 20, 2009.
- A limited number of the most appropriate pre-proposals will be selected for development into full proposals. The full proposals will be due before noon on November 4, 2009.
- The UTCA Advisory Board, external peer experts, and the Executive Committee will review the full proposals.
- Proposals will be prioritized for funding by the Executive Committee based upon the review process. PIs will be notified of selection for funding by November 24, 2009.
- PIs may be asked to make minor alterations to their proposals, and must resubmit revised proposals by December 9, 2008.
- Authorization can occur for initiation of faculty projects by early January, 2010, assuming that any required alternations to the proposals have been successfully completed.

PRE-PROPOSALS

Pre-Proposal Topics

UTCA's primary emphasis is to support the UTCA theme and emphasis area. As part of its support of the national surface transportation research program, UTCA will concentrate its wide network of interdisciplinary expertise on the three campuses to build teams of focused researchers to conduct projects. Research may be conducted from the National Highway Research and Technology Partnership report *Highway Research and Technology: The Need for Greater Investment*; from the *USDOT Transportation Strategic Plan*; from the *USDOT*

Research, Development and Technology Plan; and from the *FTA Strategic Research Plan*. PIs are encouraged to contact their campus Associate Director for assistance in identifying topics from these documents. In addition, they are encouraged to discuss their potential topics with the administrators of the federal research program in which they have interest. The Associate Director may be consulted for contact information about the program administrator.

PIs may propose on any topic of interest; however, priority for funding will be given to projects that directly support the UTCA theme. The updated “*UTCA Annual Research Plan (for Projects Starting January 1, 2010 or later)*” was prepared by the UTCA Advisory Board and UTCA Executive Committee to identify projects of high priority to the transportation future of Alabama, including the national surface transportation research program. These projects are strongly recommended to UA System faculty members. More than half of UTCA’s research projects will be supported in two areas designated in the Plan: Mobility/Capacity and Freight Mobility/Capacity.

To assist UTCA faculty members in pursuing projects in the high priority areas mentioned above, UTCA is encouraging multi-campus, multi-year projects. For projects focused to support the national surface transportation research program, the proposal idea should come from national surface transportation research documents, and it is recommended that federal officials be contacted to help shape the proposal. A letter or email of support for the proposal objective from federal officials lends useful support when attached to the Pre-Proposal. The goal is to gain a national reputation for UTCA and make national agencies think of UTCA when funding arises, as well as to attract national-level funding to UTCA.

Guidelines for Pre-Proposal Contents

The pre-proposal should be brief, and it should include the following:

- (1) Cover page—project title (50 characters max), principal investigator’s name and contact information (title, address, department, university, telephone, fax, and email).
- (2) Body of pre-proposal—no more than two single-spaced pages (8½” x 11”) that provide:

A brief statement of the project objective.

A statement that indicates which element of the UTCA theme or of the UTCA Annual Research Plan is supported by the proposal or that the proposal does not support the plan.

A description of the project and plan of work.

A description of the project schedule.

A description of project personnel.

A statement of how the project promotes UTCA’s diversity goal, its human resource goals, and its technology transfer goal.

If appropriate, include information concerning how the proposer will use results from the proposed research to gain further external funds and gain credit for those funds for UTCA.

(3) Personnel previously funded by UTCA – an additional single-spaced page providing:

The name of any member of the proposing team who has previously received UTCA funding, along with a list of refereed journal publications arising from that funding and any external, follow-up funds credited to UTCA arising from that funding. If no member of the proposing team has previously been funded by UTCA, this page should be omitted.

(4) Budget—an additional single-spaced page providing:

- A closely estimated project budget using the categories in Table 1. Values from the table are used to report data to the federal government, so the format in Table 1 must be used.
- Faculty salaries must be given by named individual according to level of effort for specific periods, i.e., “D S Turner, 10% in spring semester, one month in summer;”
- Report Editing/Printing – The budget must include a \$500 line for report editing and printing. This amount will be retained at UTCA headquarters when a project is authorized and initiated.
- A statement must be included to describe the sources for any matching funds used (note: matching funds are not required, but consideration for funding priority will be given to pre-proposals with significant matching funding from non-university sources); and
- The proposed project start date and duration must be identified in the budget materials.

Table 1: Designated UTCA Budget Line Items

	UTCA funds (cash)	**Matching funds (if any)
Admin staff salaries*		
Faculty salaries		
Student salaries (grad & undergrad)		
Fringe benefits		
Total salaries and benefits		
Scholarships and GRA tuition		
Permanent equipment		
Expendable property and supplies		
Other - expendable equipment		
Domestic travel		
International travel*		
Report peer review, editing and printing	\$500***	
Other – explain		
Total expenses		
Total direct expenses		
F&A (Indirect costs)		
Total cost		
*Normally prohibited except in unusual situations; exceptions must be justified by PI and approved by UTCA Executive Committee and US DOT as appropriate		
**Matching funds are not required but may be used at the preference of the PI.		
***A report review/editing/printing fee of \$500 is required from each project funded by UTCA.		

(5) Other Information – There are strict limits on other materials submitted with the proposal.

- PI's biographical information (only the lead PI) is limited to one-page and is not needed if the PI has previously submitted a proposal to UTCA.
- Additional, relevant information is limited to a single page.

Pre-Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Selection of pre-proposals for development of full proposals will be based upon the following:

- (1) The extent to which the proposed project supports the UTCA theme and UTCA 2010 Annual Research Plan;
- (2) The importance of the project topic to the transportation future of Alabama and the nation;
- (3) The PI's demonstrated understanding of the problem;
- (4) The merit of the proposed research approach;
- (5) The extent to which the proposers demonstrate that they have used previous UTCA funding to publish refereed journal papers or to bring to UTCA additional external funding;
- (6) The extent to which proposers show they plan to use UTCA funds as seed money to generate successful proposals to external funding agencies; and
- (7) The degree of teaming among the UA System faculty members in proposal preparation and project execution that will promote multi-campus faculty collaborations and develop a network of interdisciplinary expertise.

Pre-Proposal Submission Instructions

Ten single-bound copies are due not later than noon on September 29, 2009 at the address of your campus Associate Director. PI's must also submit an electronic copy of their proposal in Word or PDF format via e-mail to their campus Associate Director. **UA electronic proposals should be submitted to UAUTCA@cba.ua.edu.**

Questions and How to Get Answers

This request for proposals has deliberately been brief. The Executive Committee recognizes that many questions will arise as PIs select topics, write pre-proposals, and prepare final proposals.

Each PI is encouraged to contact the Associate Director on his or her own campus to obtain rapid answers to questions and interpretations of this document.

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