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By: USF Communications

Source: Joel Volinski, Director – National Center for Transit Research at USF, 813-974-9847,
jvolinski@cutr.usf.edu

USF awarded \$2.8 million as U.S. DOT center for livable communities

(Tampa, Fla.) Sep. 30, 2013 — The University of South Florida's Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) has successfully competed for a two year, \$2.8 million federal grant to continue work done through its National Center for Transit Research (NCTR). USF is one of only 35 universities to be selected to receive a University Transportation Center grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation in 2013. The grant allows for the continuation of a program that started at USF in 1991, but requires recipients to be selected through a national competition from more than 100 universities throughout the United States. USF has prevailed in all four competitions conducted for Tier I University Transportation Center grants since 2002, and is the only university in the country to have done so.

The University of South Florida will be the lead university and administrator of the grant. The grant will be shared with The University of Illinois at Chicago, Florida International University, and the Texas Transportation Institute at Texas A&M University.

The competition for the grant required applicants to compete in one of five themes representing the Department of Transportation's strategic goals: livable communities, safety, state of good repair, economic competitiveness, and environmental sustainability. While CUTR has done considerable research in all of these theme areas, it applied under the category of livable communities due to the strong research capabilities it has demonstrated in the field of public transportation through its National Center for Transit Research.

U.S. Representative Kathy Castor supported the funding of this grant application, noting "NCTR will conduct research in all forms of public transportation and non-motorized transportation being that public transportation and transportation demand management make livable communities possible. The result of their efforts will also serve to encourage new student entrants to the field of transportation and sponsor professional development opportunities for students in Florida and throughout the nation."

The grant will provide \$1.4 million a year for two years to fund transportation research, education/training, and technology transfer activities. The research to be conducted will be targeted toward making public transportation safe, efficient, effective, desirable, and secure. In addition to conducting research, the National Center for Transportation Research will continue other activities including:

- Producing the Journal of Public Transportation, the only peer-reviewed university journal dedicated to public transportation issues with a world-wide circulation;
- Administer electronic forums and information clearinghouses with more than 10,000 members to allow the sharing of information among transportation professionals and students in a free and flexible manner;
- Host the GIS in Transit Conference attracting an international audience to share the latest applications of geographic information system technologies to improve public transportation planning and performance;
- Support the development of students with an interest in careers in the field of public transportation

Since 1991, the National Center for Transit Research has brought in \$27 million of U.S. DOT grants, matched one to one by community partners, for its transportation research and education center. The Florida Department of Transportation has been an indispensable partner in providing most of the funds required to match the federal grants. In addition to being the lead recipient of a Tier I grant from the USDOT, CUTR was also included as a partner on three other successful university applications for similar grants. CUTR will work with and receive additional funding from:

- The consortium led by the University of Tennessee as the Regional University Transportation Center for the Southeastern United States;
- The consortium led by Rutgers University as the National University Transportation Center for research involving the state of good repair for transportation infrastructure; and
- The consortium led by Portland State University as the National University Transportation Center for research involving livable communities.

“CUTR and the National Center for Transit Research have long been jewels for the University of South Florida,” said College of Engineering Interim Dean Rafael Perez. “USF has become one of the most prominent research public universities in the country, thanks to programs like CUTR that have established an excellent national reputation in transportation research. The work they have done through the National Center for Transportation Research has immediate relevance to operating transportation agencies and has led to research conducted on behalf of other federal sponsors as well. We are particularly pleased to collaborate with so many other fine universities through the University Transportation Center program.”

CUTR’s Director Jason Bittner noted that “This grant allows USF to remain at the forefront of transit and community focused research. Our team will help solve our nation’s transportation challenges and train the next generation of transportation professionals.”