Program Progress Performance Report for University Transportation Centers

SOLARIS INSTITUTE

Safety and Operations of Large-Area Rural/Urban Intermodal Systems Institute

Submitted to:
U.S. Department of Transportation
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology (OST-R)

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Report Term: Semi-annual

Program Director:
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Signature of Submitting Official:

____________________________________
1. Accomplishments

1.1 What are the major goals and objectives of the program?

The major goals and objectives of the program as outlined in the proposal include the following categories.

Research
SOLARIS’s research is focused on safety in addition to other U.S. DOT strategic areas. The three main research areas involve: 1) Traffic Safety Data Management and Crash Mitigation; 2) Technologies for Safe Traffic Operations and Management; and 3) Safe and Sustainable Infrastructure. SOLARIS will conduct applied research in all of these areas to produce methodologies and tools that can be implemented to tackle long-standing and emerging transportation issues. The expected outcomes of each research topic are listed below:

Traffic Safety Data Management and Crash Mitigation

- Improved quality of safety data through better data collection and inventory
- Implementation of scientifically sound crash data analysis methodologies and software tools
- Reduction of injury and fatal crashes in both rural and urban areas
- Maximization of the rate of return for all safety project investments

Technologies for Safe Traffic Operations and Management

- Congestion mitigation to reduce travelers’ frustration and to promote safe driving
- Reduction in air pollution and noise to promote livable communities
- Efficient freight movement to improve the regional and national economy

Sustainable and Safe Transportation Infrastructure

- Improved safety, mobility, and environment for tribal lands and rural towns
- Innovative materials that will prolong the life of pavements and bridges
- Expanding and integrating advanced traffic modeling technologies into infrastructure risk analysis under earthquake and other disastrous events

**Rigorous Project Selection Process**
To aid in the project selection process, SOLARIS organized a Technical Advisory Committee composed of professionals from public and private agencies. The Technical Advisory Committee is responsible for reviewing, ranking, and recommending research projects.

**Leadership**
SOLARIS is composed of several nationally and internationally known transportation programs and academic leaders. The resources from the five institutions composing the consortium make SOLARIS a highly qualified team that can significantly contribute to the advancement of transportation research. Four ways in which SOLARIS will measure the effectiveness of its leadership include studying innovative ideas that strengthen long-term vision and goals; delivering new models and tools that are readily implementable into practice, disseminating research through journal publications and conference presentations; participating in academic and professional organizations. The leadership group includes Center Director Zong Tian, Center Coordinator Erika Hutton, and Associate Directors Pitu Mirchandani from Arizona State University and Rafiqul Tarefder from the University of New Mexico.

**Education and Workforce Development**
Education and workforce development are important to the success of SOLARIS. The universities in the consortium currently have both undergraduate and graduate programs that focus on transportation. SOLARIS plans to enhance these transportation programs by providing course material in sustainability and mobility for large sparse rural-urban regions. Another educational and workforce development goal for SOLARIS is to hold workshops, conferences, and continuing education courses in order to educate the public, industry, and academic communities. Summer camps, internships, and fellowships will also be conducted in order to attract a new generation of professionals to transportation.

**Technology Transfer**
SOLARIS has established a plan in order to provide technology transfer. This plan includes the publication of reports, peer-reviewed journals, and conference papers; showcases; seminars; webinars; and international cooperation and collaboration. UNR hosts visiting scholars to present at seminars for transportation professionals and students. PhD and Master candidates are also
presenting at seminars every week at UNR. In addition, links to principal investigators presenting research through webinars is posted on the website.

**Collaboration**
SOLARIS has outlined the framework by which collaboration within the consortium, public agencies, educational and professional organizations, and industry and other private companies will be developed. This collaboration framework aims at providing collaborative brainstorming, research, decision making, and activities related to education and technology transfer. The following list provides detailed information about the different collaborative categories.

**Collaboration within the Consortium**
Some of the collaborative efforts involving the five institutions of SOLARIS include the sharing of transportation courses via interactive classrooms and distance learning technologies. This will provide students with a broad set of transportation-related courses, which no single university would be able to offer. SOLARIS has created collaborative committees in which faculty members from different institutions serve as graduate committee members. In addition, collaborative research between the institutions will best use institutional resources and expertise on delivering high quality research products.

**Collaboration with Public Agencies**
The different institutions composing SOLARIS have a strong collaborative effort with many transportation agencies. These agencies include the USDOT; the Departments of Transportation from Arizona, Nevada, and New Mexico; the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) of Washoe County; the RTC of Southern Nevada; Maricopa County Department of Transportation, Maricopa Association of Governments, Cities of Phoenix, Tucson, and Tempe in Arizona; and the City of Las Vegas.

**Collaboration with Educational and Professional Organizations**
Outreach activities for K-12 schools and tribal colleges will focus on recruiting students that are interested in transportation research and education. The faculty members of the consortium are active in various professional organizations such as ASCE, ITE, TRB, APTA, INFORMS, and ITS America. In addition, the faculty members have or are currently serving as committee chairs in some of these organizations.
**Collaboration with Industry and Private Companies**

Partnerships with industry, industry-related organizations, and private companies are encouraged by SOLARIS in order to develop, promote and support transportation research and education. These types of collaboration efforts will effectively promote technology transfer activities.

**1.2 What was accomplished under these goals?**

**Research**

Quarterly progress reports are still being required to confirm projects are on schedule with a sufficient completion rate. The reports are now designed to fulfill the needs of matching organizations as well as the UTC program’s requirements.

Projects are starting to wind down. The total number of completed projects is now 29. Only 11 projects remain, 9 of which are in line to be completed by the original grant end date. Two have been granted the extension period to May 30, 2019.

**Leadership**

Center Coordinator Erika Hutton and Associate Directors Pitu Mirchandani (ASU) and Rafiqul Tarefder (UNM) continue their roles at SOLARIS. Dr. Nader Ghafoori continues serving as the UNLV Coordinator.

Center Director Zong Tian is a member of the planning committees for two major international conferences: International Symposium on Enhancing Highway Performance and World Conference on Transportation Society (WCTRS). Dr. Tian continues his role as Technical Area Manager (TAM) for overseeing Area C of the WCTRS, which includes four Special Interest Groups covering traffic operations, traffic safety, highway capacity and design, and intelligent transportation systems.

**Education and Workforce Development**

Planning for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Civil/Transportation Engineering Summer Camp at UNR is underway. The camp will take place in July 2018.

**Technology Transfer**

The center has been conducting weekly seminars. In these seminars, guest speakers and graduate students present their current research activities. Guest speakers are scheduled once a month, if possible, during the semester. The upcoming seminar schedule and past presentations are posted on the SOLARIS website.
A workshop is also planned in May for university faculty and professional engineers who are interested in traffic signal control. Critical issues and cutting-edge technology applications will be a major part of the workshop.

**Collaboration**

The collaboration efforts SOLARIS has been part of during this reporting period include the following:

**Collaboration within the Consortium**

SOLARIS has successfully implemented a method in which faculty members from different institutions can serve as graduate committee members. This reporting period, Dr. Zong Tian from the University of Nevada, Reno served on a PhD Dissertation committee for Qiong Wu, originally at the University of New Mexico and now moved to University of Hawaii with Dr. Guohui Zhang.

**Collaboration with Public Agencies**

The Nevada Department of Transportation Board continues to match projects to be conducted by consortium members within Nevada, including the University of Nevada, Reno, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and the Desert Research Institute.

UNR researchers continue to work with the RTCs in both Washoe County and Las Vegas to address imminent transportation issues and improve transportation system efficiency, such as implementing new signal timing for arterial streets. One new area of research is application of LiDAR technologies in traffic safety and traffic operations. Additional funding has been provided by NDOT and RTC on this cutting-edge research.

UNR and University of Arizona are collaborating on pursuing research projects to improve signal coordination for both Arizona and Nevada. Dr. Tian from UNR and Dr. Wu from UA continue to work on two projects, sponsored by the City of Tucson and Nevada DOT. Additional funding and agreements are in process with City of Phoenix, AZ.

Dr. Tian is collaborating with RTC in Southern Nevada by providing technical support and training on signal timing. A new contract is in process for using the TranSync tool for improving existing traffic signal timing practices.
Collaboration with Educational and Professional Organizations
UNR is collaborating with Beijing Institute of Technology, China to jointly develop a realistic signal system simulation system called PASS (Physical Arterial Signal Simulation) that would connect micro-simulation, real NEMA controllers, physical small-size intersections and cars, which will be used for education and research purposes. This is the first-ever system that has been developed. It is anticipated to provide close-to-real signal control systems where students can learn the process of designing, implementing, and evaluating signal control in a lab environment. Two such systems have already been built and delivered to two universities in China (Tianjin Chengjian University and Lanzhou Jiaotong University). One system has been shipped to UNR and is being setup in the Traffic Signal Control Lab.

Collaboration with Industry and Private Companies
The Center for Advanced Transportation Education and Research (CATER) at UNR is still in the process of establishing an advanced traffic signal control lab with partial sponsorship from Econolite Inc. Econolite has donated their Centrac control software for research purposes. The lab construction concluded in June 2015. The ITS lab completion is currently in process. UNR has also been collaborating with Trans-Intelligence, LLC to advance the TranSync software. Trans-Intelligence provided $15,000 to support UNR’s effort.

Alon Asphalt USA, Ergon Asphalt Co. and Western Emulsions continue to supply engineered emulsions for the conduct of laboratory experiments and provide technical input on field applications and construction techniques. The research team has also been working with local agencies such as Carson City Pubic Works and Douglas County Public Works to collect materials from ongoing pavement construction projects.

Dr. Sanders of UNR continues to collaborate with various companies to gain information on various sealers. These include Sika, Prosoco, Advanced Chemical Tech, BASF, ChemMasters, Echem, Transportation Industries, Five Star and KwikBond.

Additional collaborations may be found in Table 2 under Section 3.2.

1.3 What opportunities for training and professional development has the program provided?
The weekly seminars are open to the general public, particular to local and state transportation agencies and graduate students. Webinars and training workshops are being planned to promote traffic signal timing and coordination practices.
1.4 **How have the results been disseminated?**
- Twenty-nine total final reports have been completed and sent to the various agencies as required by the grant.
- Several presentations and publications have been made based on the research.

1.5 **What do you plan to do during the next reporting period to accomplish the goals and objectives?**
The following tasks are planned in order to accomplish the goals and objectives of SOLARIS.

- Stay updated on funded projects and their progress.
- Update SOLARIS website and RiP as necessary.
- Attend Summer CUTC meeting in June.
- Continue fostering professional relationships for Distinguished Lecturer seminar series.

2. **Products**

2.1 **Publications, conference papers, and presentations**

“Automatic Background Filtering and Lane Identification with Roadside LiDAR Data” was accepted by the IEEE ITSC 2017 Conference in Japan, where it was presented by Dr. Hao Xu of UNR in October 2017.


2.2 **Website(s) or other internet site(s)**
The SOLARIS website is located at http://www.unr.edu/solaris. This website is used to disseminate any information related to the program. It is updated monthly, or as needed.
2.3 Technologies or techniques
The TranSync tool will continue to be promoted to agencies to improve the current practice on signal timing and coordination. Field demos were provided to the following agencies: Portland, Montgomery County in Maryland, Alabama DOT, City of San Marcos, and Ada County, ID.

Dr. Hao Xu at UNR has been testing the LiDAR technology on signal control and safety under the connected vehicle environment. LiDAR sensors have been installed at two intersections in Reno with additional installations being planned.

UNR is working with NDOT on implementing SafetyAnalyst software for traffic safety data management and analysis.

The pedestrian handling guide at coordinated signal systems has been used in signal timing projects in Reno and showed improved results due to minimization of signal transition.

2.4 Inventions, patent applications, and/or licenses
Nothing to report for this period.

2.5 Other products
Nothing to report for this period.

3. Participants & Collaborating Organizations

3.1 Who has worked on the program?
The members of SOLARIS include the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR); the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV); Arizona State University (ASU); the University of New Mexico (UNM); and the Desert Research Institute (DRI). Table 1 lists the individuals who have worked on the program during this reporting period.
Table 1: SOLARIS Staff Working on the Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Zong Tian</th>
<th>Pitu B. Mirchandani</th>
<th>Rafiqul A. Tarefder</th>
<th>Nader Ghafoori</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program/Project Role</td>
<td>Program Director</td>
<td>Associate Director at ASU</td>
<td>Associate Director at UNM</td>
<td>UNLV Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of hours worked during the reporting period</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution to Program/Project</td>
<td>Oversees overall operations of the program. Responsible for coordinating with stakeholders and developing and implementing the SOLARIS Strategic Plan.</td>
<td>Serves as liaison between SOLARIS and ASU.</td>
<td>Serves as liaison between SOLARIS and UNM.</td>
<td>Serves as liaison between SOLARIS and UNLV.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding Support</td>
<td>UNR</td>
<td>ASU</td>
<td>UNM</td>
<td>UNLV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborated with individual in foreign country</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country(ies) of foreign collaborator</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traveled to foreign country (for center related business)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If traveled to foreign country(ies), duration of stay</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 What organizations have been involved as partners?
Table 2 lists the organizations that have partnerships with SOLARIS and Table 3 lists the members of the Technical Advisory Committee.
Table 2: Organization Creating Partnerships with SOLARIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization Name</th>
<th>Location of Organization</th>
<th>Partners Contribution to Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Financial Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada Department of Transportation</td>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County</td>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada</td>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Las Vegas Global Economic Alliance</td>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico Department of Transportation</td>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maricopa Association of Governments</td>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona Department of Transportation</td>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California Department of Transportation</td>
<td>California</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Econolite Control Products Inc.</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Carson City</td>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douglas County</td>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans-Intelligence, LLC</td>
<td>Texas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas Tech University</td>
<td>Texas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada Highway Patrol</td>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HollyFrontier Refining and Marketing</td>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alon Asphalt USA</td>
<td>California</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ergon Asphalt Co</td>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Emulsions</td>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Las Vegas</td>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada Cement Company</td>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico State University</td>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USDA, Jornada Experimental Range</td>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureau of Land Management</td>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>National Resource Conservation Service</td>
<td>New Mexico</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3: Technical Advisory Committee Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Expertise</th>
<th>Position/Agency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tracy Larkin</td>
<td>Operations, Design</td>
<td>Deputy Director, NDOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Fuess</td>
<td>Traffic Operations</td>
<td>Assistant District Engineering, District 2, NDOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ken Mammen</td>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>Chief Safety Engineer, NDOT Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve Merrill</td>
<td>Design/GIS</td>
<td>Chief Engineer, Location Division, NDOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Troy Martin</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Engineer, Bridge Division, NDOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathan Morian</td>
<td>Pavement</td>
<td>Engineer, Materials Division, NDOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randy Travis</td>
<td>Traffic Information/Planning</td>
<td>Chief, Traffic Information, NDOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manju Kumar</td>
<td>Operations, Planning</td>
<td>Research Coordinator, NDOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Poston</td>
<td>ITS/Operations</td>
<td>Engineer, RTC of Washoe County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott Gibson</td>
<td>Pavement</td>
<td>Engineer, RTC of Washoe County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian Hoeft</td>
<td>Traffic Operations</td>
<td>Director of FAST, RTC Southern Nevada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raymond Hess</td>
<td>Transportation Planning</td>
<td>Manager, Planning Division, RTC Southern Nevada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sondra Rosenberg</td>
<td>Transportation Planning</td>
<td>Assistant Director of Planning, NDOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammad Moabed</td>
<td>Pavement/Traffic</td>
<td>Former District 2 Engineer, NMDOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parveez Anwar</td>
<td>Pavement Materials</td>
<td>Engineer, NMDOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarath Joshua</td>
<td>ITS/Safety</td>
<td>Program Manager, Maricopa Association of Governments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott E. Nodes</td>
<td>Traffic/Design</td>
<td>Arizona DOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Bertini</td>
<td>ITS/Traffic</td>
<td>Professor, Portland State University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Nevada

#### New Mexico

#### Arizona

#### Academia (External)
3.3 Have other collaborators or contacts been involved?
Caltrans officially purchased and adopted TranSync tool for their signal timing projects during the last reporting period. Other new users include Washington County, OR and City of Phoenix. It has been used as a major tool for the regional signal re-timing effort in Reno-Sparks region.

4. Impact

4.1 What is the impact on the development of the principal discipline(s) of the program?
More awareness to Transportation Engineering within the college and community due to the various activities that have been created under the grant, including invited speakers, technology transfer and research.

4.2 What is the impact on other disciplines?
Nothing to Report.

4.3 What is the impact on the development of transportation workforce development?
Exchange of information has been made possible through Distinguished Lecturer Seminars, which include professional and academic entities, held at the University of Nevada, Reno.

4.4 What is the impact on physical, institutional, and information resources at the university or other partner institutions?
Our research in the signal control area has attracted interests from various agencies, which could become potential sponsors.

4.5 What is the impact on technology transfer?
Several presentations have been made at international and regional conferences. The signal timing tools have been tested in various agencies to improve the efficiency of developing signal timing plans. Our proposed signal timing methodology can have a major impact on the way we do signal coordination, for example, developing timing plans without traditional manual turning movement counts.
4.6 **What is the impact on society beyond science and technology?**

Improved signal system efficiency not only shows significant reduction in travel time and user costs, but also the improvement on air quality due to reduction in hazardous emissions. All these will bring improved quality of life for the citizens and protection of natural resources. Each of our signal timing projects has produced emission reductions up to 25 tons annually.

5. **Changes/Problems**

5.1 **Changes in approach and reasons for change**  
Nothing to Report

5.2 **Actual or anticipated problems or delays and actions or plans to resolve them**  
Nothing to Report

5.3 **Changes that have a significant impact on expenditures**  
No significant impact is perceived.

5.4 **Significant change in use or care of animals, human subjects, and/or biohazards**  
Nothing to Report

5.5 **Changes of primary performance site location from that originally proposed**  
Nothing to Report

5.6 **Additional information regarding products and impacts**  
Nothing to Report

6. **Special Reporting Requirements**

The University of Nevada, Reno’s Office of Sponsored Projects will submit Federal Financial Reports as needed.